

**ASOKA AND THE MISSIONS
FROM THE EXTENDED MAHĀVĀMSA**

TRANSLATED BY ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU

Asoka and the Missions

(from Extended Mahāvamsa V, XII-XV, XVIII-XX)

edited by
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(1937 - 2481)

translated by
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(June, 2012 - 2556)

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Introduction

Texts

Extended Mahāvamsa, Chapters XII-XIV, edited by G. P. Malalasekera, Colombo 1937. Reprinted by the Pali Text Society, Oxford, 1988. The text is reprinted here through the kind permission of PTS.

for the variants: Mahāvamsa, Chapters XII-XIV, edited by W. Geiger 1908. Reprinted by the Pali Text Society, Oxford, 1958.

The manuscripts that the text is based on are all written in, or copied from, texts written in Cambodian script, and for that reason it is sometimes known as the Cambodian Mahāvamsa. However just because the manuscripts are in that script cannot be taken as evidence of its provenance without further indication, which appears to be lacking. Indeed all the evidence seems to point to the text being written in Śrī Laṅkā, as was the original text.

The text has extended the first section¹ of the more usual Mahāvamsa in two ways: through addition and through rewriting, adding in further information, some of which is, at least *prima facie*, of importance, though we have no way of ascertaining its authenticity, as we cannot even determine the date of the text, beyond it being after Mahānāma's text.²

¹ That is, the first thirty-seven chapters, which is the original rescension of the text, written by Mahānāma in the 5th century of the Christian era.

² Malalasekera dates it to the 9th-10th centuries: after Mahāvamsa and its Ṭīkā, and before the continuation to the text was made in the 12th century by Dhammakitti.

In the selections I have translated here the additions vary from one or two line insertions that clarify, or give additional information, needed for understanding the text; to whole blocks of information lacking in the original.³ The rewrites are generally also expansions, although occasionally they just rewrite one line or one verse with another, which the author thought clarified some point or other.⁴ In other cases, where a summary of spoken exchanges is given in Mhv. they are reproduced in direct speech in the Extended version of the text.

In my impression this is, for the most part, done in a quite seamless way, and I think if we only had the Extended version, it would probably pass as the work of one author, except in a small number of places where there are grammatical or organisational problems of one sort or another,⁵ though it is clear that the author of the Extended section hasn't the same level of writing skill as Mahānāma.

According to the editor of the text⁶ the work has drawn upon the Mahāvamsa Ṭīkā (Mahāvamsa-Līnattha), the Buddhāvamsa and possibly its Commentary, Thūpavamsa, Mahābodhivamsa, Vinaya Mahāvagga, Jātakatṭhakathā and the Samantapāsādikā for the extra material. As far as I can see it does not, however, make any direct quotes from these works, and it is still unclear whether the author had other sources available, including, all importantly, the Sinhala Commentaries.

³ Malalasekera has made a very good comparison of the text with Mhv and its Ṭīkā (which he also edited) in the informative Introduction to his edition.

⁴ 14.26b is an instance of this.

⁵ See 13.26b-28a, where an absolutive sub-clause is left hanging without a finite verb to complete it; and the note to 13.9a where a section appears to be out of place, but it is so in both versions.

⁶ Edition, p. xl.

Translation

As far as I know the translation presented here is the first translation into English of any section from the Extended version of the Mahāvamsa. In preparing the text and translation I have made two versions.

The first gives the text and the translation line by line. In this edition colour-coding has been adopted so that where the text agrees (largely) with Mhv. it is printed in blue and red:⁷

Jinanibbānato pacchā pure tassābhisekato

After the Emancipation of the Victor and before the consecration

and where it is additional it is printed in purple and green:

aṭṭhārasasādhikam vassatadvayaṃ atikkamā.
in excess of two-hundred and eighteen years had passed by.

The English only version, which is a rewritten and a more fluent translation of the Extended Text, marks the common text in blue and the additional material in purple.

From the Emancipation of the Victor to the consecration
in excess of two hundred and eighteen years had passed
by.⁸

It has sometimes been necessary to take two lines together for the purposes of translation, and occasionally three. These are then printed together, and the translation is printed afterwards.

⁷ Generally, when the text agrees in wording for more than half a *pādayuga* (pair of lines) I mark it as in agreement; less than that I mark it as belonging to the Extended version.

⁸ Here the first half of the sentence is common to both texts, the second half is only found in this form only in the Extended version.

Places and People

The text concerned is mainly of importance for the information it gives on the early years of Asoka, his conversion to Buddhism, holding the Third Council, and then the spread of Buddhism in the Missionary period of the Dispensation.

In the first selections, which are made from Chapter V of the text, we are informed about Asoka's career when he was vice-sovereign, the birth of his children Mahinda and Saṅghamittā and his ascension to the throne after murdering his brotherly rivals.

This is followed by his meeting with the novice Nigrodha, who so greatly impressed him, his disillusionment with the other ascetic groups and his growing faith in Buddhism.

Once converted Asoka proved to be a great support to the Dispensation and besides building 84,000 monasteries in honour of the 84,000 teachings that the Lord Buddha had given he also gave his children for ordination, purified the Saṅgha and organised the Third Council which ratified the Teaching.

Incidentally as these stories are being told there are also many interesting accounts included in the text, like a previous life-story of Asoka and his relatives; his seeing of an image of the Buddha thanks to the Nāga-King Mahākāla; and a retelling of the Partridge Birth-Story (Tittirajātaka, Jā 319) in verse.

Following the Council, the Missions were sent out and the later selections provide information not only as to *where* the religion spread, but also, and perhaps equally important, as to *how* it spread.

As for *where*, the Missions seem to have gone out to the border districts in all directions: taking Asoka's capital Pāṭaliputta as the centre of the radius, we can see that the Missions went, for example north, to Kasmīra-Gandhāra⁹ and to the Himālayan regions; in the west to the Ionian districts,¹⁰ Aparantikā and Mahāraṭṭha; further south to Vanavāsī and Mahisamaṇḍala, and on to Sri Laṅkā. And in the east – if indeed that is where it is – to Suvaṇṇabhūmi.¹¹

In the text below v. 12.7 includes the important information, that besides the monks who were named as the missionaries, there were also other monks accompanying them. We may infer as much, as they would be needed for the ordinations that were given, but some have argued that there were already monks present in the areas visited.¹² Although that is not impossible, given the addition here it would also not be necessary either, and it seems to me that the monks would not have travelled alone on such important missions, but in company of other monks, even when they are only named in the case of Mahinda's mission, which is, in any case, dealt with in much more detail.

We can compare for this Chapter XII v. 6, which simply says: “He¹³ sent the Elder Majjhima to the Himālaya□ districts.” But later when we come to v. 45-47 the text itself states that at least four other Elders accompanied him, and that between them they converted five countries.

⁹ Seemingly treated as one country or district, see the note to v. 3 below.

¹⁰ Probably around modern-day Pakistan, following the Greek armies had of Alexandria, during his push to the East.

¹¹ The location of which is much disputed, and there is no clear answer to where it was. Some believe it was lower Burma, others Central Thailand and still others in India itself.

¹² See Prapod Assavariruhlakarn: The Ascendency of Theravada Buddhism in Southeast Asia, p. 61 (Silkworm Books, Bangkok, 2010).

¹³ It refers to the Elder Moggalitissa, who directed the Missions.

Methods of Conversion

As to how the Missions went about their work, that also is very interesting. Gathering the evidence here we can see that it was not simply a didactic exercise, in many places the monks had first to prove that their powers were superior to the local dieties – Nāgas, Yakkhas and the like – which they encountered in the border countries.

One of the most dramatic accounts is the first one, which is given in detail, concerning Majjhantika in Kasmīra-Gandhāra, who overcame the Nāga King Āravāla and his companions, established them in the Refuges and Precepts and gave them good advice on proper behaviour before giving any formal Dhamma teaching to the populace.

A similar story is told of the two Elders Soṇa and Uttara, who were sent to Suvāṇṇabhūmi, and defeated a demoness who was eating all the children born in the King's palace. One of the Elders created with his psychic powers a larger army of demons and chased the original group out. Again this is before any formal teaching took place.

In other cases a display of supernatural powers certainly is said to have helped: Rakkhita stood in the sky to do his preaching in Vanavāsī. Mahinda was able, through his psychic powers, to hide – and later reveal – his companions, and also showed his powers by speaking the King's name before it was given.¹⁴ Even the novice Sumana who accompanied them on the Mission made his voice heard over the whole Island, announcing the time for the teaching.

¹⁴ This at least seems to be the purport of this obscure passage.

Not that the teaching was unimportant, indeed in some cases it appears to have been all that was needed: Mahādeva in Mahisamaṇḍala, Dhammarakkhita in Aparantikā, Mahādhammarakkhita in Mahāraṭṭha, Mahārakkhita amongst the Ionians and Majjhima and his companions in the Himālaya had no other recourse but the teaching, at least in the way it is recorded here.¹⁵

The Results

In all cases, however, eventually it was the teaching that brought about the conversions, and with them numbers of ordinations, and thereby the final establishment of the Dispensation in the country. And here there is another important thing to note: although in some cases it is only stated that ordinations took place, in others it specifies how many were male and how many female, and the latter were occasionally in the majority, as in Aparantikā.¹⁶

In Suvāṇṇabhūmi also one and a half thousand women are said to have gone forth; and famously in Laṅkā Mahinda had to send back to the home country and get his sister Saṅghamittā to come to give Bhikkhuṇī ordination to Queen Anulā and one thousand of the palace women.

Another important thing to notice is the record of the attainments: eighty thousand in Kasmīra-Gandhāra, forty thousand in Mahisamaṇḍala, sixty thousand in Vanavāsī, thirty-seven thousand in Aparantikā, eighty-four thousand in Mahāraṭṭha, one hundred and seventy thousand amongst the Ionians, eight-hundred million in the Himālaya, sixty thousand in Suvāṇṇabhūmi and but a thousand in Laṅkā.

¹⁵ It is interesting to note that the most popular teachings were either similes or stories of Heaven and Hell.

¹⁶ See v. 40 below.

Evidently these figures cannot be taken literally, but they surely do reflect a remembrance about the Missions, and they are said to have occurred in every district reported.

What we have here then is perhaps not so much an accurate, newspaper-like report of the Missions, which is something we have no right to expect anyway. But certainly we can understand that, for the compilers, these reports of overcoming local diets, the displays of magical powers and attainments were at least as an important part of the Missions' successes, as the teaching of the Dhamma, the large-scale conversions and ordinations were, and were probably regarded as no more exceptional than them either.

In the later selections I have also translated all the relevant passages dealing with the establishment of the nuns' lineage in Laṅkā, which include many details of interest about their personal progress and the strong and vigorous presence which they had in the country.

The selections presented here close with the passing away of the main actors in this part of the story as it is recorded in Chapter XX: first the two great Kings Asoka in Jambudīpa and Devānampiyatissa in Laṅkā; then the two great Missionaries Mahinda and Saṅghamittā, and the generation of monastics who had helped them establish the Dispensation in Laṅkā.

I have concentrated in these selections more on King Asoka's work in Jambudīpa, and then the Missions themselves, with special reference to the Arahats Mahinda and Saṅghamittā; and less on King Devānampiyatissa's good works and building projects in Śrī Laṅkā.

It is not that translations of these sections are undesirable, indeed they would be a great resource for those interested in the history of the Dispensation, but there are simply limits on what I can achieve at present, owing to many other commitments, and it may be I will return to the work on this text again at some point in the future.

Acknowledgement

In preparing this translation I was fortunate enough to be able to consult with two experts on Sri Lankan medieval texts and history: Prof. Dr. Junko Matsumura in Japan, who managed to solve some particularly difficult passages, and Ven. Dr. M. Wijithadhamma in Sri Lanka. However, if any mistakes remain it is solely my responsibility.

Ānandajoti Bhikkhu
August 2012

[from V. The Third Recital]¹⁷
238-338 & 462-645 ≠ 154-211 & 266-282

[Asoka's Birth]¹⁸
ExtMhv 238-245

One day King Bindusāra took his noble son Asoka, sat him on his lap, and sat there playing with him. Then he took a right-handed shell in his hand and placed it to his son, and his son urinated right there. He took it and poured it down on his son's head with the shell.

Seeing that the Queen became angry and took the youngster by the hand to her advisor Jarasāna, and was pleased to know the meaning of it.

“Do not be afraid, your son has great merit, he is incomparable, he will be the Foremost King over the whole of the Rose-Apple Isle.” After making this assurance, Jarasāna departed.

In due course, while the King's son was growing, she gave birth to another son, who was called prince Tissa.

There were one hundred and one sons for King Bindusāra. But Asoka was the most meritorious, powerful and glorious. He killed his ninety-nine brothers by different mothers and attained sole sovereignty over the whole of the Rose-Apple Isle.

¹⁷ I have included the end-titles at the top of the chapter they refer to. The original simply has the number: *Chapter Five*, etc.

¹⁸ The titles within the chapter are supplied by the translator to help give context.

from V. The Third Recital

[Asoka's Family]

ExtMhv 246-256 ≠ Mhv XIII 8-11

Formerly in the Moriyān lineage, a son called Bindusāra was born to the previous King called Candagutta¹⁹ in the city of Pāṭaliputta, and after the death of his Father, while still growing, he became the King.

To that King there were two sons of the same mother, and to those two, there were ninety-nine other sons of the King who were brothers by different mothers.

To the eldest of them all, prince Asoka, the Lord of the Earth gave the vice-sovereignty over the country of Avanti. Then one day the King came to the attendance hall and seeing his son, he sent him off saying: “Go to the country and dwell in the city of Ujjenī.”

In accordance with his Father's bidding, he went to Ujjenī by the interior road, and there in the city of Vedisa he arranged to make his dwelling in the house of the merchant Deva.

Seeing the merchant's daughter he reflected gladly and said this: “I have heard she is endowed with auspicious marks, wealth, affection, and is amiable, if they will receive these gifts I will win her favour.”

They received what was given, and he became intimate with her. After life arose in the womb, she was led to the city of Ujjenī, and there she gave birth to the Prince's handsome son called Mahinda, and also had a daughter called Saṅghamittā.

¹⁹ Candagutta was the founder of the Mauryan Empire, which eventually Asoka inherited.

from V. The Third Recital

[Asoka's Ascension]

257-275 = Mhv 22-32

When Bindusāra was lying on his deathbed he remembered his son, and sent ministers to fetch him from the city of Ujjenī. They went to Asoka with the news and announced his bidding, and he went quickly into their presence.

He placed his children and wife there on the interior road of the city of Vedisa, and went into his Father's presence. When his Father died in the city of Pāṭaliputta he did the proper duties to the body for seven days. Then he had his ninety-nine brothers by different mothers murdered, and raised the Royal canopy over himself, and was consecrated right there in the city.²⁰

After the two children were sent out of the presence of the King, the venerable mother herself resided right there in the city of Vedisa.

From the Emancipation of the Victor²¹ to the consecration in excess of two hundred and eighteen years had passed by. Within four years of attaining sole sovereignty the Greatly Famous One had himself consecrated in the city of Pāṭaliputta. From the very time of his consecration, in the firmament and the earth, league by league²² did his orders always have penetration.

²⁰ This appears to have been an initial coronation as King in the City, later (see v. 265) he was consecrated King over the whole Empire.

²¹ I.e. the Buddha.

²² For the origin of this special power, see v. 298 below.

from V. The Third Recital

Day by day the gods brought eight loads of water from Lake Anottata²³ on carrying-poles, and the God-King distributed them to the people.²⁴ From the Himālaya the gods brought betel-wood toothpicks, sufficient for countless thousands of people, and also myrobalan medicine, yellow myrobalan, and supremely ripe, beautiful, sweet-smelling and tasty mangoes.

The protective gods brought five-coloured clothes, yellow strips of cloth for the hands, and divine water from Lake Chaddanta. The Nāgas brought fallen jasmine flowers, and unthreaded divine waterlilies, and collyrium ointments for the eyes from the divine Nāga mansions.

Moreover the parrots brought ninety thousand carts of finest rice from Lake Chaddanta day by day. After breaking that rice, the mice made it into fine rice without chaff or powder, and that was the food for the King's family.

Honeybees constantly made honey for him, and bears wielded the hammers in the smiths' forges. The female cuckoo birds, which have pleasing and sweet voices, after going to the King, made sweet sounds for him.

²³ The purest water that can be found, being brought from the Himālaya.

²⁴ In verse 328 it explains how the King later redistributed this water to those who were worthy.

from V. The Third Recital

[The Conversion of Asoka - 1]

1: 276-291 = Mhv. 33-48

The consecrated King Asoka also consecrated the prince called Tissa, who was his younger brother of the same Mother, to the vice-sovereignty. His Father Bindusāra had fed sixty thousand brāhmaṇas of the brāhmaṇa faction, and for three years he also fed them.

But having seen they were not quiet in his house Asoka said: “After investigating the donation I will give,” and gathered his ministers. The wise one had the various sectarians brought separately and investigated them on their seat, and after feeding them, sent them away.

One time, while stood at the window, he saw a peaceful striver,²⁵ the novice Nigrodha, going along the street, and his heart gained faith. The young man was the son of prince Sumana, the eldest brother of all of Bindusāra's children.

Asoka had left the sovereignty of Ujjenī, given by his Father, and gone to the City of Flowers when Bindusāra was sick and took possession of the city. With the death of his Father he killed all his elder brothers and took sovereignty over the noble city.

Prince Sumana's queen, of the same name, being pregnant, fled from there to outside the eastern gate and went to an outcastes' village. There a banyan-tree god called her by name and built a house and gave it to her.

On the same day the noble son was born, and to her son she gave the name Nigrodha, because of the assistance of the god.

When the elder outcaste saw her, he honoured her like his mistress, and attended on her well for seven years.

²⁵ The word in Pāḷi is *yati*, a denomination still sometimes used in Sri Lanka for monks.

from V. The Third Recital

The Elder Mahāvaruṇa, having seen that the boy was endowed with the supporting conditions for Worthiness,²⁶ asked his Mother to let him go forth, and in the shaving house²⁷ he attained Worthiness.

While going from there to see his divine Mother, after entering the supreme city by the south gate, he went by the road along the highway through village after village.

The Lord of the World gained faith through seeing his peaceful posture, but love arose in him because of a previous life spent together.

[Asoka's Previous Birth-Story]

292-305 ≠ Mhv. 49-61

Previously, it seems, there were three brothers who were honey merchants, one would sell the honey, and two would collect the honey.

One Independent Perfectly Awakened One had a diseased wound, and another Independent Perfectly Awakened One seeking honey for his use entered the city during his usual practice of walking for alms.

A maid-servant who was going for water to the tank saw him. She asked and understood his desire for honey, and pointed with her hand and said: “Go there, to the honey-stall, venerable Sir.”

The Independently Awakened One went to the shop and waited there. The faithful merchant, gave so much honey to the Independently Awakened One the bowl was full and overflowing from the rim.

²⁶ *Arahatta.*

²⁷ I.e. as he was being prepared for ordination.

from V. The Third Recital

Seeing the bowl was full of honey and it was falling on the earth, being faithful, he made an aspiration thus: “May this donation bring me sole sovereignty over the Rose-Apple Island, and my orders be accepted a league into the sky and a league into the earth.”

When his brothers came he said: “I gave honey to such a one, you should also rejoice as the honey is also yours.”

The eldest was not satisfied and said: “Maybe it was an outcaste for outcastes always wear yellow clothes.” The middle one said: “Chase²⁸ that Independent Perfectly Awakened One across the seas.” But having heard the words transferring merit, they rejoiced.

But she who pointed out the stall went and stood there, and seeing the Seer, she worshipped him and asked: “Did you receive the honey, venerable Sir?”

He said: “Yes,” and right there: “Just what is my noble sister's wish in this?” he said, and she made her wish for Queenship, having a highly delightful form with invisible joints.²⁹

Asoka gave the honey, but Queen Asandhimittā was the maid-servant, Nigrodha said the word ‘outcaste’, Tissa said ‘across the seas’. The one who said outcaste was born in an outcaste's village, but from having desired liberation, after seven years he did attain liberation.

²⁸ Lit: *throw*.

²⁹ Meaning, I suppose, being very smooth.

from V. The Third Recital

[The Conversion of Asoka - 2]

306-330 = Mhv. 62-86

Because of that established sense of love the King very quickly summoned him, but he approached in his peaceful way. “Sit down, Dear, on a suitable seat” said the Lord of the Earth. Not having seen any other monk, he approached the lion's seat. As he approached the throne the King reflected: “Today this novice will be the master in my house.”

He took hold of the King's hand and ascended the throne, and sat below the white canopy over the King's throne. Having seen him sitting there the Lord of the World Asoka was satisfied at heart that he honoured him according to his virtue.

Having satisfied him with the food prepared for himself, he questioned the novice about the Dhamma taught by the Perfectly Awakened One. The novice recited the Section on Heedfulness³⁰ to him; after hearing that, the Protector of the Earth found faith in the Victor's Dispensation.

He said to him: “Dear, I give you eight meals in perpetuity.” He said: “I give them to my preceptor, King!” Again when eight more were given he gave them to his teacher, and with the giving of eight more he gave them to the Community of monks. With the giving of eight more, being wise, he accepted them for himself.

He took thirty-two monks and went on the second day, and they were satisfied with the King's own hand, and he taught the Lord of the Earth Dhamma and established him and the multitude in the Refuges and the Precepts.

³⁰ Geiger mentions that there are 11 sections of the Thematic Discourses with this title; but the section that came to my mind was the second in the Dhammapada.

from V. The Third Recital

After that the faithful King day by day increased the number of monks by successively doubling them until there were sixty thousand. After putting aside sixty thousand of the sectarians, he ever fed sixty thousand Buddhist monks in his house.

To feed the sixty thousand monks he had the very best staple and non-staple foods quickly got ready, adorned the city and went and invited the Community to his house. He led them back, and after feeding them he gave them many things needed by an ascetic.³¹

Then he asked: “How much Dhamma was taught by the Teacher?” Then the Elder Moggaliputta Tissa explained it to him. After hearing: “There are eighty-four thousand sections,” the Lord of the Earth said: “I will worship each of them with a monastery.”

Then the Lord of the World placed riches worth nine-hundred and sixty millions in the eighty-four thousand cities on the earth and made them start building the monasteries right there and then; and he himself undertook to have the Asokārāma built.

For the Three Treasures, Nigrodha and the sick in the Dispensation, he gave day by day separately one hundred thousand. With the wealth given to the Awakened One they continually made innumerable offerings to the Shrines in innumerable monasteries. With the wealth given to the Dhamma the people continually presented the four noble requisites to the monks who were bearers of the Dhamma.

³¹ Such as bowls, robes, strainers, etc.

from V. The Third Recital

From the water of the Anotatta³² he gave four measures to the Community; day by day he gave one to the sixty Elders who knew the Three Baskets;³³ but two he had given to Queen Asandhimittā; and the Lord of the World enjoyed two himself.³⁴ Day by day he gave toothpicks made from betel wood to sixty thousand monks and to sixteen thousand dancing women.

[King Asoka sees the Buddha]

331-338 = Mhv. 87-94

One day King Asoka heard about the Nāga King Mahākāla, of great power, who had lived for an aeon and seen the Four Perfectly Awakened Ones,³⁵ and had him brought into his presence bound by golden chains.

He brought him and had him sit under the white canopy over the throne and worshipped him with many flowers, and surrounded him with sixty thousand dancing women, and said: “Show me the form of the one who set rolling the True Dhamma, the Omniscient Great Sage with endless knowledge, Dear Sir.”

The King of the Nāgas created a captivating form of the Buddha endowed with the thirty-two marks, the eighty characteristics, encircled by a fathom-wide light and adorned with the garland of rays.

Seeing that, full of faith and astonishment, Asoka said: “Such is this mere created form! What would have been the Realised One's true form?” And his joy was raised on high.

³² See v. 267 above.

³³ Those who knew the Tipiṭaka, or Three Baskets of the Teaching by heart.

³⁴ As there are only eight measures, the numbers do not add up, and we should read *ekam* in the verse above, with Mhv.

³⁵ This means the four Buddhas who have already arisen in this auspicious aeon: Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana, Kassapa and Gotama; one more will come later in this aeon: Metteyya.

from V. The Third Recital

For seven days he uninterruptedly performed what is known as the Eye-Worship,³⁶ and the Great King, of great power, had a great festival celebrated.

* * *

[The Going-Forth of Asoka's Brother and Nephew]

462-479 = Mhv. 154-172

One day Prince Tissa went hunting and saw deer sporting in the wilderness, and having seen that he thought thus: “Even the deer who live on grass enjoy themselves in the wilderness, will not the monks who live on pleasant food also enjoy themselves?”

He went to his house and informed the King about his thought. To teach him, Asoka gave him sovereignty for seven days, saying: “You can experience sovereignty for seven days, young man, after that I will kill you.”³⁷

With the passing of seven days, he asked: “Why are you so wasted away?” “Through fear of death,” he said, and the King spoke again, saying: “Thinking that after seven days you will die you did not enjoy them, how will the strivers enjoy themselves, Dear, when they always contemplate death?”

Spoken to thus by his brother he gained faith in the Dispensation, and in time having gone hunting again, he saw the restrained Elder Mahādhammarakkhita, pollutant-free, being fanned with a Sāl branch by a Nāga, and the one with wisdom reflected: ‘When will I go forth in the Victor's Dispensation and live in the wilderness like this Elder?’

³⁶ Meaning he paid respect by looking at the form uninterruptedly for seven days; a similar thing is said in the commentaries about the Buddha after he attained Awakening: he spent the second seven days doing unblinking worship (*animisapūja*) to the Bodhi Tree (see e.g. Jinacarita v. 277).

³⁷ As he had already killed ninety-nine of his brothers, this must have sounded very threatening.

from V. The Third Recital

The Elder, in order to instil faith, rose into the sky, went to Asoka's monastery and stood on the water of the pool. He hung the robes he wore in the sky and descended into the pond³⁸ and bathed his limbs.

The Prince, having seen this psychic power, gained great faith, and saying: "Today itself I will go forth!" the wise one made a wise decision. He approached and respectfully asked permission from the King for his going-forth, and being unable to prevent him, the Lord of the World surrounded by a great retinue, took him to his own monastery, and he went forth in the presence of the Elder Mahādhammarakkhita. With him roughly four thousand other men also received the going-forth, but the exact number is not known.³⁹

The Lord of Men's nephew called Aggibrahmā,⁴⁰ well-known as the husband of the King's daughter Saṅghamittā, and their son who was known by the name of Sumana, after asking permission from the King went forth with the Prince.

The Prince's going-forth was in King Asoka's fourth year and increased the benefit of the multitude. Right there he received the higher ordination, and having the supporting conditions, while striving the Prince became a Worthy One, with the six psychic powers.

³⁸ Monks are allowed three covers for their bodies: their robes, a fire-house and a body of water. See Vinaya Cullavagga, Ch.5,16,2.

³⁹ A curious admission, as the numbers never seem to be realistic anyway. Geiger interprets this as meaning: *the number of those who afterwards were ordained is not known*; but quite how he derives this meaning is unclear to me.

⁴⁰ Although I cannot find more information on Aggibrahmā, it appears he must have been Tissa's son, as it is inconceivable that Asoka, who had killed all his rivals to the throne, except Tissa, would marry his daughter to one of his rivals sons.

from V. The Third Recital

[Building the 84,000 Monasteries]

480-490 = Mhv. 173-183

All those delightful monasteries he had undertaken to build in all the cities were completed within three years. And through the superintendent Elder Indagutta's psychic power the one called Asokārāma⁴¹ was also completed. In the various places that had been visited by the Victorious Buddha the Lord of the Earth made delightful Shrines.

From the eighty-four thousand cities on all sides letters were brought on the same day, saying: “The monasteries⁴² are finished.”

Having heard the letters⁴³ the Great King, of great power, success and heroism, desired to hold great festivals himself at all the monasteries. In the cities the drum was beaten and it was announced:

“A week from this day all the monasteries must hold a festival at the same time in all directions. On the whole earth, league by league⁴⁴ give a great donation, and make decorations along the pathways and in the village monasteries. In all the monasteries everyday prepare a great donation for the Community of monks, according to the right time, and according to ability, with ornamentation of garlands of flowers and strings of lights here and there, and all musical instruments, and manifold presents. Having taken upon themselves the Observances⁴⁵ let everyone listen to Dhamma, and make innumerable offerings and merit on that day.”

⁴¹ I.e. Asoka's monastery.

⁴² Vihāra literally means *a living place*, but by this time it had taken on the special meaning of *a living place for monastics*; i.e. a monastery.

⁴³ We would say *having read the letters*, but in court the letters would have been read out.

⁴⁴ Meaning: *in every place*.

⁴⁵ This means the eightfold precepts, in brief, to restrain from killing, stealing, sexual contact, wrong speech, intoxicants, eating after noon, amusements and decorations.

from V. The Third Recital

And everyone, everywhere, in every way, in accordance with that order, prepared offerings, delighting the heavens.

[The Going-Forth of Mahinda and Saṅghamittā]

491-519 ≠ Mhv. 184-211

On that day the Great King, decked out with all adornments, together with his harem and ministers, and surrounded by his army, went to his own monastery,⁴⁶ as though splitting the whole earth,⁴⁷ and, after worshipping the supreme Community, stood in the midst of the Community.

In that assembly there were eight hundred million monks, and of them one hundred thousand were strivers who had destroyed the pollutants.⁴⁸ There were also ninety thousand nuns in that place, and at that time one thousand nuns had destroyed the pollutants. Those who had destroyed the pollutants performed the miracle called ‘Opening the World’,⁴⁹ for the purpose of instilling confidence in King Dhammāsoka.

Previously, because of his wicked deeds, he was known as ‘Violent Asoka’ and later because of his meritorious deeds he was known as ‘Righteous Asoka’.

He looked at the Rose-Apple Island, which is surrounded on all sides by the ocean, and all the monasteries decorated with many offerings, and having seen that he was very satisfied, and after sitting down, he asked the Community: “Was anyone, venerable Sirs, so generous in the Dispensation of the Greatly Fortunate One?”

⁴⁶ I.e. the Asokārāma.

⁴⁷ The simile is not clear, maybe it is meant to indicate his power.

⁴⁸ I.e. were Arahants.

⁴⁹ Described in the Buddhavaṃsa commentary as making all the beings in the universe visible to each other, from the highest heaven to the lowest hell.

from V. The Third Recital

The Elder Moggaliputta⁵⁰ answered the King's question: "Even while the Fortunate One was living there has been no generosity like unto yours!"⁵¹

Hearing that statement the King was very satisfied and asked him: "Is there anyone who inherits the Awakened One's Dispensation who is like unto me?"

The Elder saw the supporting conditions of the King's son Mahinda, and similarly of the King's daughter Saṅghamittā, and seeing the conditions for the growth of the Dispensation, being responsible for the Dispensation, he answered the King:

"Even such a one, who is greatly generous, is not known as an heir in the Dispensation. Whoever, Great King, having amassed a heap of wealth from the plains of the earth up to the tip of the Brahma worlds and would give it all as a great donation to the Community of monks is still only known as a supporter of material requisites, O Ruler of Men.

But he who lets his son or daughter go forth in the Dispensation is a true supporter of the Dispensation, as well as our material supporter.

Then the Lord of the World, wishing to have the nature of a supporter of the Dispensation, asked Mahinda and Saṅghamittā as they were standing there: "Will you go forth, Dears? Going-forth is known as a great thing."

Hearing their Father's statement, they said this to their Father: "Today we will go forth if the God-King wishes, there will be gain for us and for you in our going-forth."

⁵⁰ Ven. Moggaliputta Tissa was the Chief Elder in the Saṅgha at the time, and would soon head the Third Council.

⁵¹ Interestingly, this places Asoka above Anāthapiṇḍika as the most generous supporter.

from V. The Third Recital

Since the time of the Prince Tissa's going-forth the young man Mahinda had naturally desired to go forth; and Saṅghamittā had made a resolve at her husband Aggibrahmā's going-forth.

Although the Lord of the Earth desired to give the vice-sovereignty to Mahinda, even more that that he was pleased with his going-forth. His dear son Mahinda, who was wise, handsome and very strong, he let go forth with festivities, and also his daughter Saṅghamittā.

Then Mahinda, the King's joy, was twenty years old, and the King's daughter, Saṅghamittā, had reached eighteen.⁵² On the same day he had the going-forth and higher ordination, and on that very day she had the going-forth and the placing in training.⁵³

The prince's preceptor was called Moggali,⁵⁴ the Elder Mahādeva let him go forth, but Majjhantika⁵⁵ made the formal announcement, and in the place of the higher ordination,⁵⁶ Mahinda attained Worthiness, together with the analytic knowledges.⁵⁷

⁵² I do not know how we can reconcile this with her having had a son who had taken novice ordination two years earlier. If it were so it would mean that she gave birth to her son around age 11.

⁵³ This means she was given the further ordination as a *sikkhamāna*, which she must hold for two years, before acquiring her higher ordination as a *bhikkhūñī*.

⁵⁴ I.e. Moggaliputta Tissa.

⁵⁵ These are two of the named missionaries in the later part of the text, who took the Dispensation to Mahisamaṇḍala and Kasmīra-Gandhāra respectively. They were sent on their missions by Mahinda's preceptor, Moggaliputtatissa.

⁵⁶ It means right there in the *sīma*, or boundary-hall.

⁵⁷ They are four: *analytic knowledge of meanings, conditions, language and of improvisation*.

from V. The Third Recital

Saṅghamittā's preceptor was the well-known nun Dhammapālā, her teacher Āyupālā, and in time she also became pollutant-free. They both were Lights of the Dispensation, and helpers of the Island of Laṅkā, they went forth six years after King Dhammāsoka came to the throne.

The Great Mahinda, who brought faith to the Island, in his third year learned the three baskets⁵⁸ in the presence of his preceptor. The nun, a crescent moon, the monk Mahinda, the sun, younger sister and brother, these two were Lights of the Awakened One's Dispensation.

[Tissa and Sumitta's Story]

520-536 ≠ Mhv 212-226

Formerly a woodman from Pāṭaliputta, while roaming in a forest, became intimate with a harpy⁵⁹ called Kuntī. As a consequence of that she gave birth to two sons, the eldest was called Tissa, and the younger brother was called Sumitta. In time they received the going-forth in the presence of the Elder Mahāvaruṇa, and they both attained Worthiness and the six psychic powers.

Later the elder was stung on the foot by a poisonous insect and was suffering, and when asked by his younger brother he said he needed a measure of medicinal ghee.

The Elder opposed informing the King about that illness and roaming for ghee after the morning meal.⁶⁰ “If you receive ghee on your alms round, please bring it,” said the Elder Tissa to the supreme Elder Sumitta.

⁵⁸ The three baskets of the teaching: Discipline (*Vinaya*), Doctrine (*Dhamma*), and the Abstract Teaching (*Abhidhamma*).

⁵⁹ *Kinnarī* (masc.: *kinnara*) have a bird's wings and legs, and a human's torso and head. In Greek mythology the harpy is exactly the same, though under the influence of Christianity they were later demonised.

⁶⁰ The reason being to maintain the Disciplinary rules, which state that a monk cannot ask for his needs without being invited, and cannot seek for food after the morning meal.

from V. The Third Recital

But while wandering for alms he did not receive medicinal ghee, and the illness grew so that even one hundred pots of ghee could not accomplish a cure. Eventually, through that illness, the Elder came to the end of his life, and after advising the monks, he formed the intention of passing away.

After sitting in the sky, through the meditation on the fire element and fixing his determination on the body, as he desired he attained Emancipation. The fire element emitted from his body burned the Elder's whole body and flesh to ashes, but his bones did not burn.

Having heard about the Elder Tissa's passing away, the Lord of the Earth went to his monastery surrounded by a great army of people. The King, going on the back of an elephant, brought the bones down from the sky and, after paying respects to the relics, he asked the Community about the illness.

The Community said this to the King: “The illness increased greatly,” and after hearing that he became anxious thinking: ‘While staying in this country medicine was not given to the Community of monks, and without medicine he passed away.’

He had a pit dug at the four city gates and after having them dug and cleaned he filled them with medicine, and he had medicines for the Community of the four directions given, thinking: ‘Do not let medicine for the Community of monks be difficult to obtain.’

The Elder Sumitta passed away while walking in the cloister and through that the multitude gained faith in the Awakened One's Dispensation. Kuntī's two sons were Elders who sought the benefit of the world, they passed away in King Asoka's eighth year as King.⁶¹

⁶¹ According to MhvṬ this story was introduced here as it began the increase in the success of the Dispensation, which led to rogue monks entering the Community, which is related next.

from V. The Third Recital

[Decline of the Dispensation]

537-544 ≠ Mhv 228-235

From that time the gains of the Community were very great, and because of those people who later gained faith there were great gains. Because the sectarians lost their gains and respect, **and did not receive even so much as their food and clothing**, they themselves took the yellow robes⁶² and dwelt with the monks and each one explained his own view, saying: “This is the Awakened One’s view,” and they each carried out their own vows just as they liked.

Then the Elder Moggaliputta, who was firm in the development of virtue, saw the arising of this tumour on the Dispensation, and being far-seeing he looked for the right time to relieve it. After giving over his own great chapter of monks to the Elder Mahinda, he dwelt alone for seven years high up the Ganges on the Ahogaṅga mountain, devoting himself to solitude.⁶³

As the sectarian monks were manifold and obstinate, the monks were not able to make them train, or be restrained by Dhamma. Because of that in all the monasteries in the Rose-Apple Isle the monks did not hold the Observance or the Invitation⁶⁴ for seven years.

⁶² I.e. without proper ordination.

⁶³ This is exactly the place where the Elders who led the Second Council went to discuss what measures should be taken in regard to the Vesālī monks who were not maintaining traditional discipline.

⁶⁴ The fortnightly Observance, when the Disciplinary Rules are recited, and the yearly Invitation for correction. These are two of the main legal acts that the Saṅgha carry out, and being unable to perform them would be considered a serious problem.

from V. The Third Recital

[Murder in the Monastery]

545-576 ≠ Mhv 236-255

Having heard that, the Great King Dhammāsoka, of great fame, sent a minister to the supreme Asokārāma, saying: “Go there and please settle this dispute and have the Observance carried out for the Community of monks in my monastery.”

That minister, being unable to ask the King about that deed,⁶⁵ when another minister had approached, made this statement: “Noble Sir, the King has sent me to go and settle the dispute about the Observance and I am to make them hold the Observance. Now how can I settle this dispute?”

When it was made known to him, the minister answered: “As in the border countries thieves are killed, so you must set your mind on the death of the monks.”

He went and assembled the monks, and the fool conveyed the King's message, saying: “Hold the Observance.”

“We do not hold the Observance with the sectarians,” the Community of monks said to that minister, confused in mind.

That minister successively cut off the head of some of the Elders with a sword, saying: “Hold the Observance.”

The Kings' brother, the Elder Tissa, after seeing that deed and going quickly, sat down on a seat near him. Seeing the Elder the minister left, and informed the King: “Great King, I have felled some of the monks with a sword, but after the arrival of the Elder Tissa, what should I do?”

⁶⁵ It is not clear here, but maybe he felt he didn't have the right to question the King's order.

from V. The Third Recital

Hearing the news the Lord of the World grew feverish, and after going quickly, he questioned the Community of monks with agitated mind: “Through the doing of this deed, for whom will there be evil consequence?”

Some who were not wise said to him: “The evil consequence is yours,” but some said: “For both of you,” but the wise said: “There is no evil consequence for you.” Hearing that the Great King said: “Is there no monk who can settle my doubts, and having dispelled them, can uphold the Dispensation?”

“There is the Elder Tissa Moggaliputta, O Best of Charioteers, after dispelling your doubt, he will uphold the Dispensation.” The Community said this to the King, and the King sat down right there.

Having chosen four Elders who were Dhamma preachers, and surrounding each of them with a thousand monks, and four ministers together with a thousand men, he sent them immediately, with the words: “Go with the Elders and bring the Elder back here.”

Those Elders went there and requested the Greatly Wise One to come. The Elder heard their word but he did not come; those people came again to the King and informed him.

Again, the Lord of the World sent eight Dhamma preachers and eight ministers together with sixteen thousand men. But to them also he spoke, saying: “I will not go.”

Having come again all those people told it to the King, and the King asked the Community of monks, saying: “Twice he sent them back, venerable Sir, why does the Elder not come?”

The Community said this to him: “Because it is said: ‘The King summons you.’ ”

from V. The Third Recital

The King asked: “How can the Elder be made to come?” The monks said there had to be a good reason for the Elder to come, so say: “ ‘Venerable Sir, you should be a support to uphold the Dispensation,’ when this is said, Great King, he will come.”

Yet again the King sent sixteen Elders and sixteen ministers each with a thousand men, and he said: “Is he elderly, venerable Sir, or is he youthful?”⁶⁶

“Great King, the Great Elder is elderly, and has destroyed the pollutants. But even though the Elder is elderly he will not mount a vehicle.”

“Where does the Elder reside, venerable Sir?” he asked.

“God-King, he resides on the upper Ganges, on what is called mount Ahogaṅga.”

“Having bound together a wooden raft, friend, please lead him to us.”

They went into his presence and spoke the King's message. Hearing that the Great Elder joyously said this: “After going-forth, I came here for my own benefit,⁶⁷ now the time has arrived to uphold the Awakened One's Dispensation.”

Then he stood up, beat his leather water-jar and departed.

⁶⁶ It is curious that here Asoka does not seem to know the Elder's age, although earlier in the story he has already been in close contact with him.

⁶⁷ This is not quite in harmony with what was said above (vs. 542), about Ven. Moggaliputta already being a leader of the monks.

from V. The Third Recital

[The King's Dream]

577-594 ≠ Mhv 256-263

During the night the Guardian of the World saw a dream: A pure white noble elephant touched him on his head and took his right hand; the King was fearful and frightened, and in the morning he asked the brāhmaṇas. Hearing about it they answered: “Great King, there is no danger, there will be safety for you; one noble ascetic will come and protect you, having taken your right hand, he will dispel your doubt.”

At the instant the Guardian of the World heard that he went to the Elder and stood knee-deep in water. As the Elder came out of the ship he respectfully gave his right hand, and the Lord of the World said this: “Out of compassion for me, venerable Sir, please take my hand.”

The Great Elder, who was worthy of offerings, out of compassion for the King took hold of the King's hand, and at that instant descended from the ship. Seeing that the sword-bearer thought: ‘I will cut off his arm,’ but as he drew his sword from the sheaf, the Lord of the World saw his shadow and said: “Formerly, because of holding wrong views I found no satisfaction, do not offend against the Elder.”

The King led the Elder to the garden called Delight-Increasing, washed and rubbed his feet and sat down. Inquiring into the Elder's proficiency, the Lord of the World said: “Venerable Sir, I desire to see a miracle.”

“Which miracle?” he said.

“An earthquake” he said.

He said: “What do you desire to see, a quake of the whole earth or in one direction?”

He asked, “Which is the more difficult?” and hearing: “A quake in one direction is more difficult,” he said he desired to see that one.

from V. The Third Recital

The Elder placed a chariot, a horse, a man and a pot full of water within a boundary of a league on all four sides and shook the earth until its end for a league with his psychic power and showed it to the one sitting there.

Seeing that miracle the King said: “Uphold the Dispensation.”

After coming to the conclusion: ‘The Elder will be able to do this,’ the Lord of the World asked about his doubt: “Venerable Sir, I sent a minister to the monks, saying: ‘After going and settling this dispute in my monastery make the monks hold the Observance today,’ and he deprived so many of those monks of their lives. Through this action is there or is there not evil consequence for me?”

“Through this action there is no evil consequence because the intention was void of defilement.”

[The Partridge Birth-Story]

595-626 ≠ Jā 319

The Elder related the Partridge Birth-Story and enlightened the King:

In the past, it seems, when Brahmadata was ruling in the successful and delightful city called Bāraṇasī, the Awakening One arose in a twice-born⁶⁸ family. When he had learned all the crafts, and come to maturity and fame he left Takkasila and went forth in the Seers' going-forth.

Having gained the five psychic powers and the eight attainments in the Himālaya district, he enjoyed the absorptions, and dwelt alone in a delightful jungle abode.

⁶⁸ I.e. brāhmaṇa family, said to be twice born, because of the *upanayana* ritual in which the child is invested with the sacred thread.

from V. The Third Recital

While going to a certain border village in order to get salt and vinegar, people saw him, gained faith, made a leaf-hut in a certain forest, attended on him with requisites and made him live there with all due respect.

Then in that village one fowler captured and trained a decoy partridge and put it in a cage, and always looked after it with affection. He would take him to the wilderness, and when the partridges had gathered round at his sound, he would carry them away and sell them.

The partridge thought: ‘Because of me many of the partridge family are perishing, what is this wickedness to me?’ and became silent.

The hunter understood his silence, and beat the partridge with a section of bamboo on the head repeatedly, and he quickly made the partridge make a sound through his suffering. In this way the greedy fowler grabbed many partridges and made his living over a long period of time.

The suffering partridge reflected thus: “ ‘Alas, all of these die!’ although it is not my intention.⁶⁹ I am affected by the repetition of this deed, for when I don't make a sound they do not come. When I do make this sound my relatives come and gather round, and after grabbing them, their lives are brought to destruction. Herein, in this a wicked deed of mine or not?”

Because of that he thought: ‘Who can clear my doubts for me?’ and went round looking for a wise man.

Then one day, after grabbing many partridges and filling his basket, the hunter thought: ‘I would like to drink water.’ He went to the Awakening One's hermitage and placed the cage there in his presence, and after drinking the water he desired, he lay down on the sand and instantly fell asleep.

⁶⁹ Lit: *my intention is not found.*

from V. The Third Recital

Understanding his sleepy nature, the partridge, thought: ‘I will ask this ascetic about this doubt,’ and: ‘If he knows the answer he will answer me.’ So while sitting in the cage he questioned him with this verse:

“Happily indeed I live, I surely receive enough to eat,
but I stand in danger, venerable Sir, what is my destiny?”

Answering his question he spoke the second verse:

“If the mind is not bowed, bird, by deeds of wickedness,
there is nothing wicked for you, no wickedness attaches.”

Having heard his statement, he spoke the third verse:

“Thinking: ‘Our relative is sitting there’ many come to see,
I am affected by this deed, there is still a doubt in my mind.”

Having heard this the Awakening One spoke the fourth verse:

“The mind is not affected by this deed, there is no wrong for
you,
for the lucky one who does not act no wickedness attaches.”

Thus he convinced the partridge in many ways and through the Awakening One he lost his remorse.

The fowler, having woken, worshipped the Awakening One, picked up his cage from there, and left for home.

The Teacher, having taught this Dhamma teaching, made the connection to all in the Birth Story: “The partridge was Rāhula. The one who cleared away his doubts: that was I, the Awakened One.”

Having heard this Dhamma teaching the King was uplifted. The Elder lived there seven days in the delightful Royal Garden and trained the Lord of the World in the noble religion of the Perfectly Awakened One.

from V. The Third Recital

[Holding the Third Council]

627-645 ≠ Mhv. 266-282

At that time the Master of the World sent two yakkhas and he assembled all the rest of the monks on the earth.

On the seventh day he went to his own delightful monastery and called an assembly of the entire Community of monks. With the Elder Moggali seated on one side behind a curtain, he called the schismatic monks one by one to his presence and the Lord of the World asked: “Venerable Sir, what was the Fortunate One's doctrine?”

They explained their own view, beginning with eternalism and so on. The King then had all those holding wrong views disrobed, and those he had disrobed were sixty-thousand in all.

He also asked the monks who knew Dhamma: “What was the Fortunate One's doctrine?” They said: “The doctrine of analysis,”⁷⁰ and the Lord of the Earth asked the Elder: “Did the Perfectly Awakened One teach the doctrine of analysis?” “Yes,” he said.

The King heard him say: “Yes,” and gained faith and said: “Since the Community is now purified, therefore the Community should hold the Observance, venerable Sir.” After saying this, the Lord of the Earth gave over protection of the Community to the Elder, before he re-entered his lovely city. After the Community came back into harmony, it held the Observance.

The Elder, out of the innumerable monks in the Community who were mature, had the six psychic powers, knew the Three Baskets, and had developed the analytic knowledges, chose a thousand monks to make the compilation of the True Dhamma, and they made it in the Asokārāma.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Vibhajjavāda*, which eventually developed into the Theravāda we know today.

⁷¹ I.e. Asoka's own monastery.

from V. The Third Recital

Just as the Elder Mahākassapa and the Elder Yasa⁷² had made the Dhamma Recital, so did the Elder Tissa⁷³ do likewise.

The Elder Tissa related the Objects of Controversy⁷⁴ in the Recital pavilion which crushed the disputants. With a thousand monks, and being under the protection of King Asoka, did he complete this Dhamma recital in nine months.⁷⁵

In the seventeenth year of the King's reign, the Seer, who was seventy-two, concluded the Recital with a Great Invitation.⁷⁶ While gods and men were giving their applause at the close of the Recital the great earth itself shook.

Upāli and Dāsaka, Soṇaka, Siggava and then Tissa Moggaliputta, these victorious five brought the unbroken Discipline lineage down in what is the glorious Rose-Apple Island as far as the Third Council.

Having abandoned the excellent, pleasing Brahma mansion, for the benefit of the Dispensation, he⁷⁷ was one who came to this loathsome world of men, and did his duties for the Dispensation. Who then would be heedless in regard to the duties to the Dispensation?

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Fifth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
The Third Recital*

⁷² At the First and Second Recital respectively.

⁷³ Moggaliputta Tissa.

⁷⁴ *Kathāvatthu*, now the fifth book of the Theravāda Abhidhamma collection.

⁷⁵ The First Recital took one month to prepare and three months to recite; the so-called Sixth Council in Burma in 1956, in which the Tipiṭaka, the commentaries and sub-commentaries were all recited took two years to complete.

⁷⁶ It is not clear if this was a special Invitation for correction at the end of the Recital, or part of the normal yearly Invitation at the conclusion of the Rains Retreat.

⁷⁷ I.e. Moggaliputta Tissa.

[XII. Faith in Various Districts]

1-62 ≠ Mhv 1-55

[Summary]

1-9 ≠ Mhv 1-8

The Elder Moggaliputta, the light of the Dispensation of the Victor,⁷⁸ having brought the Third Recital⁷⁹ to a close, looked towards the future and to the establishment of the Dispensation in the border countries. During the month of Kattikā⁸⁰ he sent various Elders here and there. He sent the Elder Majjhantika to Kasmīra-Gandhāra, saying: “Have the Dispensation established there in the country.”

He sent the Elder Mahādeva to Mahisamaṇḍala. To Vanavāsī he sent the Elder Rakkhita by name; but the Ionian⁸¹ named Dhammarakkhita to Aparantikā. To Mahāraṭṭha⁸² he sent the Elder Mahādhammarakkhita; he sent to the world of the Ionians the Elder Mahārakkhita. He sent the Elder Majjhima to the Himālaya⁸³ districts; to Suvannabhūmi he sent two Elders, Soṇa and Uttara.

⁷⁸ I.e. the Buddha, often called *Jina* or *Victor* in the texts.

⁷⁹ Traditionally said to have been called by King Asoka after purifying the Sangha, and intended to confirm the true teachings. The traditional date is around 250 years after the Buddha's parinibbāna. However, Asoka doesn't mention it in his Edicts, which must put at least his part in the Council in doubt.

⁸⁰ I.e. November.

⁸¹ Or, we might say now, the Greek.

⁸² Now called Maharashtra.

⁸³ Lit: *place endowed with snow*.

XII. Faith in Various Districts

All of these Great Elders went with five besides themselves, to give the higher ordination in the border countries.⁸⁴ That Great Elder Mahinda, the Elders Iṭṭhiya, Uttiya, Sambala and Bhaddasāla,⁸⁵ his attendant monks, he sent, saying: “You must establish in the pleasant Island of Laṅkā the pleasant Dispensation of the Victor.”

[Majjhantika in Kasmīra-Gandhāra]

10-32 ≠ Mhv 9-28

Then in Kasmīra-Gandhāra, the Nāga King Āravāla, the one of great power, destroyed the ripe crops by making hail fall into the lake,⁸⁶ and all was violently upset.

The Elder Majjhantika went quickly through the air and walked up and down on the top of Āravāla's lake, then he stopped and having sat down, he instantly lay down.

Seeing that, the angry young Nāgas informed the Nāga King, saying: “God-King! This solitary shaveling wearing his patchwork cloth⁸⁷ has lain down on this lake of water, and is walking up and down on it.”

Hearing their statement the Nāga King, of great power, came out from his dwelling and did various fearful things: great winds did blow, a cloud thundered and rained, thunderbolts crashed, lightning struck here and there, trees and the tops of the mountains all fell down, and deformed Nāgas caused fright on all sides.

⁸⁴ See the introduction for a consideration of the importance of this addition.

⁸⁵ From the text below we know that two others accompanied Mahinda to Laṅkā, they are the novice Sumana, and the upāsaka Bhaṇḍuka.

⁸⁶ *Samudda* normally means *ocean* or *sea*, but Kasmīra-Gandhāra was a long way away from the ocean, and the word can cover any large body of water, which is what is meant here.

⁸⁷ Cf. 14.11 below.

XII. Faith in Various Districts

He himself angrily fumed and burned in many ways, and he sent all the Nāgas, saying: “Go, seize and kill them.”

The Elder having repelled all those fearful things with his psychic power said this to the Nāga King, showing his supreme strength:

“If the world together with its gods were to try to frighten me they would not be able to give rise to fear and fright in me here. Even if you took up the whole earth with its oceans and mountains, Great Nāga, and were to throw them at me from on high, there is no possibility of giving rise to fear and fright in me. Assuredly, doing so is only for your own distress, Ruler of Snakes.”

Hearing that he was crushed, and the Elder taught the Dhamma, and the Nāga King was established in the Refuges and Precepts, and right there and then eighty-four thousand Serpents,⁸⁸ were also established in the Refuges and Precepts.

In the Himālaya many Gandhabbas, Yakkhas and Kumbhaṇḍakas were very quickly established in the Refuges and Precepts, but the Yakkha named Bhaṇḍaka, together with the Yakkhinī Hāritā, and their five-hundred children attained Path and Fruit.

Then the Elder Majjhantika said this to all the Nāgas: “Now do not get angry in the future as in the past, and do not destroy the crops, for breathing beings desire happiness. Develop loving-kindness towards people, and let humans live happily.”

Like this they were admonished and they followed the path. The Ruler of Snakes made the Elder sit down on a jewelled couch and stood near by fanning him. Then the humans residing in Kasmīra-Gandhāra who had come in order to worship the Nāga King, after discussing and worshipping the Elder of great power, sat down on one side.

⁸⁸ Another term for Nāgas.

XII. Faith in Various Districts

The Elder taught them the Dhamma about the Simile of the Poisonous Snake.⁸⁹ For eighty thousand of them there was a penetration⁹⁰ of the Dhamma, and one-hundred thousand men went forth⁹¹ in the presence of the Elder.

Since that time until now those in Kasmīra-Gandhāra are light up with the monastic robe, finding support in the three objects.⁹²

[More Missions]
33-47 = Mhv 29-43

The Elder Mahādeva went to the district of Mahisamaṇḍala and preached the Discourse on the Divine Messengers⁹³ in the midst of the people. Forty thousand people purified the Dhamma-Eye,⁹⁴ and forty thousand people went forth in his presence.

* * *

⁸⁹ Probably SN 35. Sut. 238, although there are others that include a relevant simile. An appropriate simile for Nāgas to learn, there four poisonous snakes represent the four elements, which are subject to disintegration.

⁹⁰ I.e. they attained Path and Fruit. *Abhisamaya* is the noun regularly used in this connection. Cf. *passim*.

⁹¹ I.e. ordained as monks. Technically *pabbajjā* is the lower ordination, which is normally followed by *upasampadā*. But here and elsewhere in this text it appears to be used as a shorthand to indicate both. It appears from this again, that Majjhantika must have been the leader, and was probably accompanied by at least four other monks, to make up the number required to give the higher ordination.

⁹² The three objects of reverence, i.e. the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

⁹³ MN 130. Another simile, this time about the signs of sickness, old age and death, which one heedless ignores.

⁹⁴ I.e. they attained path and fruit.

XII. Faith in Various Districts

The Elder Rakkhita went to Vanavāsī and while standing in the sky he preached the Thematic Discourses on the Unknown Beginning⁹⁵ in the midst of the people. For sixty-thousand people there was a penetration of the Dhamma, around thirty-seven thousand went forth in his presence.

Five hundred monastic dwelling places were established in this district, and the Elder established the Dispensation of the Victor⁹⁶ in that place.

* * *

The Ionian Elder Dhammarakkhita went to Aparantikā and preached the Discourse on the Simile of the Mass of Fire⁹⁷ in the midst of the people. Thirty-seven thousand breathing beings who had assembled together there tasted⁹⁸ the Deathless Dhamma of the one skilled in what was Dhamma and not Dhamma.

A thousand men and even more women than that from the Noble families renounced the world and went forth.

* * *

The Seer Mahādhammarakkhita went to Mahāraṭṭha and preached the Birth Story called Mahānāradakassapa⁹⁹ in that place. Eighty-four thousand people attained Path and Fruit, and thirteen thousand people went forth in his presence.

* * *

⁹⁵ SN 15. Similes about the extreme length of Saṃsāra.

⁹⁶ Another epithet for the Buddha.

⁹⁷ AN Bk. 7 sutta 68, on the preference of embracing fire over embracing a woman.

⁹⁸ Lit. *drank*.

⁹⁹ Jā 544. On Heaven and Hell.

XII. Faith in Various Districts

The Seer Mahārakkhita went to the locality of the Ionians¹⁰⁰ and preached the Kālakārāma Discourse¹⁰¹ in the midst of the people. One hundred and seventy thousand breathing beings attained Path and Fruit, and ten thousand went forth.

* * *

The Seer Majjhima, together with four Elders,¹⁰² went into the Himālaya district and Set Rolling the Dhamma Wheel.¹⁰³ Eight-hundred million breathing beings attained Path and Fruit. Separately these five Elders brought faith to five countries, and a hundred thousand men in the presence of each of the Elders went forth,¹⁰⁴ having faith in the Dispensation of the Perfectly Awakened One.

[Soṇa and Uttara in Suvāṇṇabhūmi]

48-62 ≠ Mhv 44-55

The Elder Uttara and the Elder Soṇa, of great psychic power, went to Suvāṇṇabhūmi. But at that time whenever children were born in the King's Palace, a fierce demoness would leave the ocean and eat it and would then depart. At that moment in the King's Palace a prince was born and people, having seen the Elders, thought: 'These are friends of the demons.'

¹⁰⁰ This was probably not Ionia itself, but where the Greeks were still stationed on the edge of India, possibly around what is now Pakistan, following the campaigns of Alexandria the Great.

¹⁰¹ AN Bk. 4 Sut. 24. On the lack of conceit in the Buddha in regard to sense objects.

¹⁰² According to the Dīpavaṃsa the companions were named Kassapaḡotta, Durāsada (= Dundhubhissara in MhvṬ), Sahadeva and Mūlakadeva, though these names are given in different forms elsewhere.

¹⁰³ A play on words, the Dhammacakkappavattana, which was the First Discourse of the Buddha, is found at SN 56.11.

¹⁰⁴ That means, I believe, a hundred thousand went forth in the presence of each of the Elders.

XII. Faith in Various Districts

Thus thinking to kill them they approached with weapons. Seeing them holding weapons in their hands, he asked: “Why did you come?” “The children born in the Royal family are eaten by demons, and you are friends with these demons.”

When this was said, the Elders said this to those people: “We are virtuous ascetics, who are restrained from killing breathing beings, having unmatched goodness, we are not friends of the demoness.”

At that moment the demoness said to her assembly: “I will eat the children,” and quickly left from the waters. Having seen them, the multitude cried out a loud cry: “The demons have come to eat us all!”

The Elder, having created twice as many fearful demons, surrounded that demoness and her assembly on all sides. After seeing that created demoness' assembly in all directions and considering: ‘This land is now theirs’, fearfully she ran away.

He placed a protection of that district on all sides and the Elder taught the Discourse on Brahma's Net¹⁰⁵ in that gathering and established the multitude in the Refuges and Precepts.

But for sixty thousand there was a penetration of the Dhamma, and three and a half thousand sons of good families went forth. One and half thousand daughters of good families also went forth. Since that time when a prince was born in the King's Palace the Kings gave them the names of Soṇa and Uttara.

The very sympathetic Victor, renounced attainment of the Deathless happiness for himself, and sought the benefit of the world here and there. Who would be heedless in benefiting the world?

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Twelfth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
Faith in Various Districts*

¹⁰⁵ DN 1.

[XIII. Mahinda's Journey]

1-29 ≠ Mhv 1-21

[To Vedisa]

1-8 ≠ Mhv 1-8

Then the Great Elder Mahinda, having twelve Rains,¹⁰⁶ being of great intelligence, ordered by his preceptor and the Community to bring faith to the Island of Laṅkā sought the right time thinking:

‘King Muṭasiva is old, he is unable to uphold the Dispensation, if his son Piyatissa were to become King he would be able to uphold the Dispensation of the Teacher, therefore the time has not arrived when I will go to the Isle.’

In the meantime Mahinda, having resolved his mind to go later, in order to see his relatives went to the noble Dakkhiṇāgiri,¹⁰⁷ and after worshipping his preceptor and Community, he asked the Lord of the Earth¹⁰⁸ and took with him four Elders, and his sister Saṅghamittā's son, the novice Sumana, who had the six deep knowledges and great power.

To give favour to his relatives he went to Dakkhiṇāgiri and while walking from one place to the other six months passed by. Having by and by reached his Mother Devī's city Vedisagiri he saw his Mother, and Devī, seeing her dear son, prepared food for him and his assembly, and then made the lovely monastery called Vedisagiri, and announced it to the Elder.

¹⁰⁶ In the monastic life seniority is counted by the number of Rains Retreats one has completed. At twelve Rains Mahinda would be an Elder, although still quite a young monk.

¹⁰⁷ It was a state (*janapada*) situated more or less where Madhya Pradesh is now, having Ujjenī (modern Ujjain) as capital.

¹⁰⁸ King Asoka, his Father.

XIII. Mahinda's Journey

[Asoka's Children in Avanti]

9-13 ≠ Mhv 9-11

While he was enjoying the country of Avanti, which was given to him by his Father, Prince Asoka, on his journey to the city of Ujjenī, arrived at the city of Vedisa and dwelt in that noble city, and received a girl named Devī, a merchant's daughter. He took ahold of that lovely and handsome girl in the noble city of Vedisa, became intimate with her, and through him she conceived¹⁰⁹ a child.

In Ujjenī she gave birth to a son, prince Mahinda, and after two years had passed also to a daughter Saṅghamittā,¹¹⁰ and fourteen years after his child, Asoka attained his consecration. Then at that time she¹¹¹ dwelt in the city of Vedisa.

[Determining the Time]

14-21 ≠ Mhv 12-17

Then the Elder, after residing there, thinking: ‘This is the right time, for in the consecration festival which is ordered by my Father the Great King Devānampiyatissa will partake,¹¹² and having heard about the virtues of the Three Objects from the envoy may he understand.

¹⁰⁹ Lit: *an embryo took hold*.

¹¹⁰ It is clear from this that Devī was more of a courtesan, and not the main Queen (*Aggamahesī*), who is named elsewhere in the Chronicle (5.85) as Asandhimittā; the latter died quite early and Asoka then raised Tissarakkhā to Queen, see XX v.6 below.

¹¹¹ Presumably referring to Devī.

¹¹² Although he partook in the coronation, it appears he did so without attending, probably simply by sending tribute and good wishes.

XIII. Mahinda's Journey

May he ascend mount Missaka on the Observance day¹¹³ in the month of Jeṭṭha,¹¹⁴ and we will go on the same day to the noble Island of Laṅkā.’

At that time the lord of the gods came into the presence of the Elder and Sakka said this to the Great and Supreme Elder Mahinda: “Venerable Sir, now the King Muṭasiva has died and his son Devānampiyatissa¹¹⁵ is making his rule, therefore, venerable Sir, this is the right time to go to the Isle, go to bring faith to Laṅkā, as predicted by the Perfectly Awakened One, and we will provide the support for you there.”

Devī's sister's daughter's son,¹¹⁶ Bhaṇḍuka by name, having heard the Dhamma preached by the Elder Mahinda to Devī and attained the Fruit of Non-Returner, dwelt in the presence of the Elder.

[Arrival in Laṅkā]

22-29 ≠ Mhv 18-21

After dwelling in the delightful city of Vedisa for thirty nights, thinking: ‘This is the right time for the journey’, he said: “We will go now to the supreme Island.” The Elder Mahinda advised them of this on the Observance day in the month of Jeṭṭha¹¹⁷ and with the four Elders, Sumana and Bhaṇḍu¹¹⁸ the householder, by knowing their human state,¹¹⁹ they rose in succession from the monastery above the clouds and those Elders, shining like kings of geese in the sky, in an instant came here and stood resembling mountain clouds on the top of the delightful mount Missaka.

¹¹³ That is on the Full Moon day, the fast days are observed on the New Moon and Full Moon days.

¹¹⁴ The month after Visakhā, normally falling in June.

¹¹⁵ The name means: Tissa, Beloved of the Gods.

¹¹⁶ I.e. Devī's grand-nephew.

¹¹⁷ Normally falling in June.

¹¹⁸ The young man is sometimes called Bhaṇḍu in the narrative, and at others Bhaṇḍuka. Both would mean *shaven-headed*.

¹¹⁹ I do not understand the text here, but MhvṬ doesn't see a problem and paraphrases: *manussabhāvajānanāya*.

XIII. Mahinda's Journey

Standing like geese on the mountain peak on the top of the mountain were the Community Elder known by the name of Mahinda, the Elders Iṭṭhiya, Uttiya, Bhaddasāla and Sambala and the novice Sumana, who had the six deep knowledges and great power, and the young man Bhaṇḍu, these seven who had seen the Truth. Thus these Great Elders lit up the Island of Laṅkā.

As predicted by the Sage on his last resting place,¹²⁰ for the benefit of Laṅkā, through the virtue of the faith of Laṅkā, he who, through being of benefit to Laṅkā, was like the Teacher,¹²¹ through the protective gods of Laṅkā came to reside there.

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Thirteenth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
Mahinda's Journey*

¹²⁰ I.e. the Buddha on his death bed in Kusināra.

¹²¹ I.e. Mahinda.

[XIV. Entry into the City]

1-80 ≠ Mhv 1-65

[The Meeting]

1-15 ≠ Mhv 1-10

Over two hundred years after the Emancipation of the Perfectly Awakened One Mahinda established the Dispensation in this Island on the very day the root of the constellation of Jeṭṭha was reached.¹²² The King there had it proclaimed in the city, after assembling his ministers, saying: “Please proclaim a festival for us.”

King Devānampiyatissa, having given a water-sport for the city-dwellers, went for the sport of deer-hunting. While running on foot surrounded by forty-thousand of his men he came to mount Missaka.

The god of the mountain, wishing to show him the Elders in that place, took a form like an elk grazing in the thicket. The King, having seen him, thinking: ‘It is not proper to shoot one who is heedless,’ therefore struck his bow-string, and the elk ran to the top of Ambatthala,¹²³ and pursuing from behind he also ascended the Ambatthala.

The King chased along, but he ran within the presence of the Elders, and with the Elders not so distant the elk himself vanished.

The Elder, thinking: ‘Seeing many people he will be afraid,’ determined: ‘Let the King see no-one other than myself,’ and having made the resolution, he showed himself immediately.

¹²² I.e. the full moon day in what is normally June.

¹²³ A plain in front of the Missika mountain, it means: Mango Plain, and perhaps gets its name from the discussion that follows.

XIV. Entry into the City

Seeing the King coming Mahinda came from afar and said: “Tissa, Tissa, come hence!” Having heard the word ‘Tissa’ the fearful King reflected: ‘Here in this island there is no man born, who, having taken it, is able to speak my name Tissa,¹²⁴ but this solitary shaveling, wearing his patchwork robe, a cloth died with yellow dye, called me by name Tissa. What is this: a human being or a non-human being?’

After understanding the sense of the King's thoughts, the Elder said this: “We are ascetics, Great King, disciples of the King of the Dhamma. Having compassion on you, we have come here from the Rose-Apple Island.”

Having heard this statement of the Elder, he became without fear, and remembering his friend's¹²⁵ message he considered: ‘He is an ascetic’. Having put aside his bow and arrow he approached the Seer, and, greeting the Elder, he sat down in his presence.

[The Questions]

16-28 ≠ Mhv 11-23

Then the men who had come with him surrounded them and he showed the rest of his friends, the Great Elders. Seeing them the King said: “When did these come?”

“They came with me,” said the Elder, and again the King asked this: “Are there other strivers like these in the Rose-Apple Island?”

He said: “The Rose-Apple Island shines with the dyed robe, moreover, in that place there are those with the Three Knowledges, psychic powers, skill in mind-reading, Worthy Ones with Divine Hearing, and many disciples of the Awakened One.”

He asked: “By what means did you come?”

¹²⁴ The syntax here is very obscure. In the Mahāvamsa version he appears to call the name to calm him and let him know he is a friend.

¹²⁵ Presumably meaning Asoka.

XIV. Entry into the City

“Neither by land nor by water did we come,” he said, so he understood: ‘They came through the air.’

Enquiring, the One with Great Wisdom asked him a wisdom question, and one question after another the Lord of the World answered in this way and that:

“This tree, King, what is its name?”

“The name of this tree is mango.”

“Aside from this, are there other mangoes?”

“There are many mango trees.”

“Aside from this mango and those mangoes, are there other trees?”

“Venerable Sir, there are many other trees, and those trees are not mangoes.”

“Aside from those mangoes and those not mangoes, are there other trees?”

“There is this mango tree, venerable Sir,”

“Lord of Men, you are wise!

Do you have relatives, King?”

“There are many, venerable Sir,”

“Are there others who are not relatives, King?”

“There are many who are not relatives,”

“Aside from these and the others, is there anyone else?”

XIV. Entry into the City

“There would be myself,”

“It is good!” he said.

Having understood: ‘He is wise,’ the Elder taught the very wise Lord of the World the Short Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Foot.¹²⁶ At the end of the Teaching, together with forty-thousand of his men, he established him in the Refuges and Precepts.

[Ordination and Teaching]

29-50 ≠ Mhv 24-41

In the evening an offering of food was brought to the King, then after hearing the Discourse that was spoken by Mahinda, although the Lord of the Earth knew: ‘They will not eat now’, thinking: ‘It is not suitable to eat without having asked,’ and: ‘It is right to ask,’ he invited the Seers to the meal, saying: “What will you eat, venerable Sir?”

“We do not eat now.”

When this was said the King inquired: “What is the right time?”

“Starting from dawn up and till the middle of the day.”

When the right time was told, he spoke thus: “We will go to the city.”

“You go, Great King, we will take up residence here.”

“If that is so, let this young man go with us.”

¹²⁶ MN 27. About others who come to refute the teaching of the Buddha, but end up as his disciples; and the gradual Path leading to Awakening

XIV. Entry into the City

“This young man has come to Path and Fruit,¹²⁷ King, understood the Dispensation, and is seeking the going-forth, therefore he must dwell in our presence, we will give him the going-forth now, but you can go, Lord of the Earth.”

“In the morning I will send a chariot, standing in that you can proceed to the city.”

He worshipped the Elders and led Bhaṇḍu to one side and asked what the Elder referred to, and he told the King all: “God-King! These five monks have destroyed the pollutants, they are Great Elders of great wisdom, who have developed analytic knowledge.”¹²⁸

After rejoicing: ‘The Elders have been received,’ he thought: ‘This is a gain for me.’

Because of Bhaṇḍu's lay appearance the Lord of Men lost his fear,¹²⁹ knowing he had the nature of a man.

Saying: “We will let him go forth,” the Elder, in that village boundary, at that very instant, gave to the young man Bhaṇḍu the going-forth and the higher ordination, and at that very instant he also attained Worthiness.

Then the Elder addressed the novice Sumana: “Please announce the time for listening to the Dhamma now.”

¹²⁷ As stated above in 13.21 he had attained the third Path and Fruit.

¹²⁸ It means the four branches of analytical knowledge: *analytic knowledge of meanings, conditions, language and of improvisation*.

¹²⁹ Although he is said to have already lost his fear above (v. 14), on learning they had come out of compassion.

XIV. Entry into the City

“When sounding it, venerable Sir, how far shall I announce it?”

“Over the whole of the Copper-Dust Island,”¹³⁰ and when this was said, he said: “It is good!”

The novice attained a basis in the four absorptions¹³¹ and after making a resolution and rising from it, three times through his own psychic power he sounded it through the whole of Laṅkā, announcing the time for the Dhamma Teaching.

The King, who was sitting on the side of the Four Nāgas tank eating, after hearing that roar, sent his ministers to them. Having quickly gone and worshipped them all, they asked: “Is there some danger?”

He said: “There is no danger, the time was being announced to hear the Perfectly Awakened One's words.”

Having heard the roar of the novice, the Earth-Gods announced it too, and in succession the sound thus rose up to the Brahmā world. With the announcement a great many gods assembled and the Elder taught the Discourse on the Peaceful Mind¹³² in that assembly.

An innumerable number of gods penetrated the Dhamma and many Nāgas and Supaṅṅas were established in the Refuges. Just as when the Elder Sāriputta spoke this Discourse an innumerable number of the gods penetrated the Dhamma, so did the gods who assembled around the Elder Mahinda.

¹³⁰ DPPN: *the name given to that district in Ceylon where Vijaya landed after leaving Suppāraka (Mhv.vi.47; Dpv.ix.30). It is said to have been so called because when Vijaya's followers, having disembarked from the ship, sat down there, wearied, resting their hands on the ground, they found them coloured by the red dust that lay there.*

¹³¹ The four absorptions (*jhāna*) give one the strength of mind to effect psychic powers.

¹³² AN Bk. 2, Sut. 31. On gratitude.

XIV. Entry into the City

[Entering the Town]

51-80 ≠ Mhv 42-65

At daybreak the King sent the driver, yoked the chariot, and said:
“Go quickly to mount Missaka and lead those Elders here.”

He yoked and drove the chariot and put it aside at mount Missaka,
and having worshipped the Supreme Elder, he said to them:
“Mount the chariot, and let us go to the city.”

“We do not mount chariots, you go and we will follow after you.”

After saying this and sending the driver away with good wishes,¹³³
and ascending into the sky, the ones with great power descended at
the east of the city, on the place of the First Shrine.

On that place where the Elders first crossed over, a Shrine was
made, so it is said today, and therefore it is called the First Shrine.

Having dismissed the driver, the King had a pavilion made in the
inner residence having a decorated canopy.¹³⁴

Having heard from the King of the Elders' virtues, all the women
in the harem desired to see the Elders, therefore the Lord of the
World had a delightful pavilion made inside the Royal Grounds,
covered and decorated with white cloth and flowers.

Having heard in the presence of the Elder that they had given up
using high seats he had a doubt: ‘Can the Elder sit down on a high
seat or not?’

¹³³ Geiger misinterprets this, even parsing the compound wrongly. It
should be *su*, *good* + *manoratha*, *wishes*, not *ratha* + *sumanas*.

¹³⁴ These two additional lines seem to only repeat what is said in verse 58
below, and one wonders whether they were meant to replace them?

XIV. Entry into the City

The driver, who was thinking about this, went to the door of the First Shrine, and having seen the Elders standing in that place, and putting on their robes, was greatly surprised in mind, and after going to the King announced: “They are coming, God-King.”

The King, after questioning the driver, said: “Look here, did the Elders stand in the chariot or did they all come to the city on foot?”

“They did not mount the chariot, God-King, but following me they came and are now in front of the western door.”

Having heard that, he said: “Now, these Noble ones do not desire to sit on chairs, therefore it is good to spread out a cover on the floor,” and having gone in front he respectfully worshipped the Elders, taking the Great Elder Mahinda's bowl from his hand, and with manifold respect and worship he led the Elder to the city.

Having seen the designated seats the fortune-tellers predicted: “Having taken the ground, they will be Lords of this Island.”

The Lord of Men brought those Elders to the noble harem, and having seen the prepared seat, the Elder thought thus: ‘The noble Dispensation of the Teacher has been established in the Island of Laṅkā, having spread a cloth on the earth it will remain.’

They sat down there on the cloth seat, according to their worth,¹³⁵ and the King himself satisfied them with rice-gruel, staple and non-staple foods, and at the conclusion of his duties concerning the meal he himself sat down nearby.

He had his younger Brother, the deputy King Mahānāga's wife, Anulā, who resided in the Royal Palace, summoned and said: “Pay your respects and worship in front of these.”

Queen Anulā came with five hundred women and worshipped and honoured the Elders and took a seat on one side.

¹³⁵ It means that they sat in line according to their seniority.

XIV. Entry into the City

At the end of the meal duties, raining Dhamma-jewels down on the King, the Queen, the women and the multitude, the Wise One taught the Ghosts Stories and the Divine Mansions, and also the Thematic Discourses on Truth¹³⁶ to the assembled multitude, and having heard them five-hundred women attained the First Path and Fruit.

Having heard of the Elders' virtues from those who had seen them on the previous day many of the city-folk gathered desiring to see the Elders, and made a loud noise all around the King's Gates.

The King, having heard the commotion, questioned them and understood, and the Lord of the World, after giving orders to his ministers, said this: "Here they are all crowded together, clean up the State Elephant's stall and the city-folk can see the Elders there."

Having cleaned up the Elephant stall and quickly decorated it with canopies and so on, they prepared the seats according to their worth, and after going there and sitting down on the seat the Elder, the Great Preacher, preached the Discourse on the Divine Messengers.¹³⁷

Having heard it, the city-folk who had gathered round, gained faith, but a thousand breathing beings attained the First Path and Fruit.

In the Island of Laṅkā, he who was like the Teacher, the incomparable Elder, resolved on the good of Laṅkā in two places. After speaking on Dhamma in the language of the Island he thus made the True Dhamma descend on the Island of Light.

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Fourteenth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
Entry into the City*

¹³⁶ I.e Petavatthu (KN 7), Vimānavatthu (KN 6) and SN 56.

¹³⁷ MN 130. As Mahādeva did in Mahisamaṇḍala above, v. 33.

[from XV. The Acceptance of the Great Monastery]

[The Great Cloud Monastery and Queen Anulā]

1-37b ≠ Mhv. 1-26b

“The elephant stall is crowded,” said those who had assembled there, and outside the southern gate, in the delightful Joy Grove, in the King's garden, which was well-covered, cool and grassy, the people reverentially prepared seats for the Elders.

Having left by the southern gate, the Elder sat down there, and the one skilled in Dhamma related the Simile of the Poisonous Snake.¹³⁸ In that place one thousand breathing beings entered into the first Path and Fruit¹³⁹ on that day, and on the second day also two and a half thousand penetrated the Dhamma.

Many women from the great families came there, and after worshipping, sat down, filling the garden. The Elder taught the Discourse on the Fools and the Wise,¹⁴⁰ and one thousand of those women entered into the first Path and Fruit.

And so there in that garden the evening time set in, and therefore the Elders departed, saying: “We go to the mountain.”

Seeing them going men said: “The Elders have left straight away,” and they went and informed the King. The King went quickly, and after going and worshipping the Elder, the Lord of the Planet said: “Venerable Sir, it is far from here to the mountain in the evening, live comfortably right here in the Joy Wood.”

“It is unsuitable, being too near to the city,” he said.

¹³⁸ Probably SN 35. Sut. 238, although there are others that include a relevant simile. It was also taught by Majjhantika in Kasmīra-Gandhāra, see above XII v. 30.

¹³⁹ I.e. they became Stream-Enterers (*Sotāpanna*).

¹⁴⁰ MN 129; it relates the deeds done by fools and by wise men and their respective rewards.

from XV. The Acceptance of the Great Monastery

Hearing that he uttered this statement to the Elder: “The Great Cloud Grove is neither too near nor too far, delightful, endowed with shade and water, be pleased to reside there. You should turn back, venerable Sir!” and the Elder turned back.

In that place where they turned back, on the banks of the Kadamba river,¹⁴¹ the Shrine called the Turning Shrine was built.

The Best of Charioteers led the Elders to the south of the Joy Wood, through the Eastern Gate in the Great Cloud Grove. There, near the delightful Palace he spread good beds and chairs and said: “Dwell comfortably here.”

The King worshipped the Elders, and surrounded by his ministers, entered the city, but the Elders dwelt for the night right there.

Having gathered flowers in the morning, the Lord of the Planet after approaching the Elders and worshipping them with the blossoms, asked: “How? Did you live happily? Was the garden comfortable?”

“We did live happily, Great King, the garden is comfortable for strivers.”

He asked: “Is a monastery suitable for the Community, venerable Sir?”

The Elder said: “It is suitable,” and the one skilled in what was suitable and unsuitable spoke about the receiving of the Bamboo Grove Monastery.¹⁴²

Hearing that the Lord of the World was happy and very joyful.

¹⁴¹ Which lay to the east of the city.

¹⁴² By the Buddha from King Bimbisāra; see The Great Chapter, section 40, elsewhere on this website.

from XV. The Acceptance of the Great Monastery

Queen Anulā together with five-hundred women came in order to worship the Elders, and after listening to the Dhamma teaching with faithful minds, they entered the second Path and Fruit.¹⁴³

Then Queen Anulā had a desire to go forth together with the five hundred women, and said this to the Lord of the World: “Today itself we will go forth, if it is your wish, Lord of the Earth.”

Hearing her statement the King said to the Elder: “Venerable Sir, Queen Anulā desires to go forth together with five hundred women, please give them the going-forth.”

“It is not suitable, Great King, for us to give the going-forth to women.¹⁴⁴ There is in Pāṭaliputta¹⁴⁵ a nun who is my younger sister, Saṅghamittā by name, who is famous and very learned, Lord of Men.

Bring the southern branch from the Great Bodhi Tree of the Lord of Ascetics,¹⁴⁶ and then also noble nuns, to the city in the Island of Laṅkā, King, as the Bodhi Trees of the three self-made Buddhas¹⁴⁷ were planted by the Kings so today the Bodhi Tree¹⁴⁸ of the famous Gotama, which has a resplendent halo, should be planted, Lord of the Earth.

¹⁴³ They became Once-Returners (*Sakadāgāmi*).

¹⁴⁴ Mahinda says this because he believes the dual ordination is necessary, whereby a *bhikkhuṇī* needs to be ordained by other nuns, and then have the ceremony confirmed by the monks. This is sometimes disputed, as the Buddha never revoked the original ordination by monks only.

¹⁴⁵ Mentioned in Mahāparinibbānasutta (DN 16, elsewhere on this website) as *Pāṭaligāma*. So called because of the *Trumpet Flowers* (*Pāṭali*) that were growing there when it was founded; it is also known as *Pupphapura* and *Kusumapura* (both meaning *Flower City*).

¹⁴⁶ It means: *a sapling*.

¹⁴⁷ These are the three Buddhas preceding Gotama in this aeon: Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana and Kassapa; all the Buddhas have different Bodhi Trees, in their cases they were: *Acacia Sirissa*, *Udumbara* (*Glamorous Fig Tree*) and *Nigrodha* (*Banyan Tree*).

¹⁴⁸ The *Assattha* or *Fig Tree* (*Ficus Religiosa*).

from XV. The Acceptance of the Great Monastery

Send a message into the presence of the King, our Father, saying: “Let her come,” and that Elder Nun will come and give the going-forth to these women.”

After saying: “Well said!” and taking the noble water-jug, the King said: “I give this Great Cloud Grove to the Community,” and sprinkled water over the right hand of the Elder Mahinda.¹⁴⁹

As the water fell on the Earth with that statement the Earths, in excess of four myriads, for two hundred leagues in extent, or a thousand thick, bearing waters to their edge, shook on all sides.

Having seen that wonder, fearful, frightened and apprehensive, the Guardian of the Earth asked: “Why does the earth tremble?”

“Do not be afraid, Great King, the Dispensation of the One of Ten Powers will be established here, and because of that this Earth trembles. The first monastic dwelling place will be in this place.”¹⁵⁰

Having heard that statement, the Lord of the World had great faith, and offered sweet-smelling jasmine flowers to the Elder.

* * *

¹⁴⁹ This is a way of making a formal donation by pouring water; it was also done this way by King Bimbisāra when he donated the Bamboo Wood.

¹⁵⁰ I.e. the Mahāvihāra, or Great Monastery, which became the seat of Theravāda orthodoxy. The emphasis is changed somewhat from the Mahāvamsa version; there, as soon as he had given the Grove the Dispensation is said to be established; whereas here it will be established only when the monastery has been built.

[from XVIII. The Acquisition of the Great Bodhi Tree]

[Requesting the Nuns and the Bodhi Tree]

1-32 ≠ Mhv. 1-18

In order to bring the Great Bodhi Tree and the Elder Nun, the Lord of the World, remembering the statement spoken by the Elder, on a certain day in the Rainy Season, while sitting in his own city near the Elder, consulted his ministers and urged his nephew, the minister called Ariṭṭha, to undertake these deeds.

After considering it and inviting him, he uttered this statement: “Dear, after going into the presence of King Dhammāsoka will you be able¹⁵¹ to bring the Elder Nun Saṅghamittā and the Great Bodhi Tree here?”

“I will be able, God-King, to bring these two from there if, after returning here, I am allowed to go forth, your Honour.”

“You may go, Dear, and after bringing the Elder Nun together with the Bodhi Tree and reaching Laṅkā, you can go-forth according to your wish.”

Having said that, the King sent his nephew, and he took the message of the Elder and the King and worshipped them.

Leaving on the second day of the bright fortnight in Assayaṅga¹⁵² he, being dedicated, boarded a ship in the port of Jambukola¹⁵³ and crossed the ocean, and through¹⁵⁴ the power of the Elder's determination, on the very day of departure it arrived at Pāṭaliputta.

¹⁵¹ *Sakkhissasi* is unclear, it suggests a verb *sakkhati*, which is not found in Pāṭi. In Mhv. there are many vvll, most of which connect it with *sakkoti*; *being able*.

¹⁵² Normally falling in October.

¹⁵³ Probably on the northern coast of the Jaffna peninsular.

¹⁵⁴ ExtMhv: *Therādiṭṭhabalena pi*; *through strength unseen by the Elder*, which doesn't make much sense.

from XVIII. The Acquisition of the Great Bodhi Tree

Then Queen Anulā, with five hundred young women, and together with another five hundred women of the harem, having undertaken the ten precepts, pure in the yellow robes,¹⁵⁵ looked forward to the going-forth and for the training rules that would come with the Elder Nun.

She made her dwelling in good conduct in the delightful Nunnery in a certain district of the town where the Lord of Men had had it made.¹⁵⁶ As these lay-women lived in the Nunnery it became well-known throughout Laṅkā as the Lay-Womens' Monastery.¹⁵⁷

His nephew Mahāriṭṭha, having reached King Dhammāsoka, spoke the King's message and the Elder's message: “Your son Mahinda, God-King, sent me into your presence. The Queen named Anulā, your friend the King Piyatissa's brother's wife, O Chief of Kings, desiring the going-forth, has undertaken the ten precepts, together with a thousand women, and lives constantly restrained. Please send the Elder Nun Saṅghamittā to give the going-forth, and together with her a branch from the south side of the Great Bodhi Tree.”

Then the minister went into the presence of the Elder Nun and said this: “Noble Sister, your brother Mahinda send me into your presence. Devānampiyatissa's brother's wife, the lay-woman called Queen Anulā, through having a desire for the going-forth, together with a thousand women, lives constantly restrained. Go together with me and please give them the going-forth.”

¹⁵⁵ It is interesting that she is portrayed as already wearing the yellow robe, even though she only has ten precepts, which are not even *sāmaṇeri* precepts. It is a strong echo of the first nun Mahāpajāpati, and her following, who also donned robes before they were ordained.

¹⁵⁶ The exact location cannot now be determined, except that it was within the city limits.

¹⁵⁷ The proper name for a residence for nuns (*bhikkhuṇī*) is an *Upassaya*; but before they were ordained they lived there as lay women under ten precepts, so it became famous as the Lay-Womens' Monastery.

from XVIII. The Acquisition of the Great Bodhi Tree

Hearing the minister's word she very quickly went to her Father and the Elder Nun related the Elder's thought: "My brother Mahinda has sent these into my presence, and after we have sent the people back, I will go. Very many people, daughters of good families, with Anulā at their head, desiring the going-forth, are looking forward to my journey."

The King, who was flushed,¹⁵⁸ hearing the Elder Nun's statement, with a shower of tears set rolling, said this to the Elder Nun: "My son Mahinda, Dear, and my grandson Sumana having left us here, I am as though with my hands cut off. They both have gone to the Copper Dust Island, I no longer see them, and great grief has arisen.

Seeing their faces today your grief will be allayed. But not seeing you also, Dear, how will I put aside *my* grief in being parted from my son and grandson? Enough, Dear, if you were to go today, you also will not return."

Hearing the statement of her Father the Elder Nun said this: "My brother's word has importance for me, King, together with the request of the great Queen and the thousand women. Further, I suppose, this is not just my brother's word and many are waiting for the going-forth, which I also desire to give, Great King, and so now I must go."

"If you desire to go take a branch of the Supreme Bodhi Tree and go, Noble Sister. You must see your brother in Laṅkā."

* * *

¹⁵⁸ Lit: *white-throated*. I cannot find this word or phrase used elsewhere, and the reading must be in doubt.

from XVIII. The Acquisition of the Great Bodhi Tree

[Festivities for the Bodhi Tree]

111-120 ≠ Mhv. 64-68

On the first day of the bright half of the month Kattikā the Guardian of the World Asoka placed a branch of the Great Bodhi Tree to the east of the root of a lovely great Sāla tree, and worshipping it day by day, on the seventeenth day new shoots starting taking hold and arose on the trunk of the delightful Bodhi Tree.

Seeing that the Lord of the World, his mind faithful and satisfied, with his ten fingers raised in reverential salutation to his head, said: “I give it sovereignty over the whole of the Rose-Apple Island,” and the Lord of the World consecrated the Great Bodhi Tree with sovereignty.

The novice Sumana who was sent by Mahinda in order to take a relic of the Teacher together with his bowl, on the Full-Moon day of Kattikā flew through the sky and arrived in the delightful City of Flowers.¹⁵⁹

At that time the Great Bodhi Tree had been placed at the root of the lovely Sāla tree and in that place he saw them worshipping with the offerings at the Kattikā festival. The Lord of the Planet placed a guard around the Bodhi Tree and dwelt near it together with his council of ministers.

All the women of the harem, with Saṅghamittā at their head went out from the city and worshipped it with all sorts of offerings, and they dwelt near the Great Bodhi Tree, together with their husband.

The worship of the beautiful, noble, excellent Bodhi Tree, with many and extensive flags, flowers and fruits at its head, opened the minds of men and the protective gods, like a lotus opened by the rays of the sun without any effort on its part.

¹⁵⁹ Another name for Pāṭaliputta, Asoka's capital, now known as Patna.

from XVIII. The Acquisition of the Great Bodhi Tree

The blossoming flowers in the lakes of Pāṭaliputta delighted the minds of the people and the protective gods. After emitting six colourful rays in the sky and on the ground, and instilling faith in all the people, it dwelt there like an Awakened One.

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Eighteenth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
The Acquisition of the Great Bodhi Tree*

[from XIX. The Journey of the Great Bodhi Tree]

1-51 & 118-120 & 166-189 ≠ Mhv. 1-31 & Mhv 68-85

[The Nuns and the Bodhi Tree set out for Laṅkā]

1-37 ≠ Mhv 1-22

In order to protect the Great Bodhi Tree, the Best of Charioteers appointed eighteen from royal families, and eight from ministerial families, eight from brāhmaṇa families, eight from merchants' families, and from the foremost and faithful cow-herders families, the sparrow weavers,¹⁶⁰ the potters families, the hyena families, eight of each were also appointed.

He sent Nāgas and Yakkhas together with their assembly and sprinkled with water brought for the purpose day by day and gave eight gold and eight silver water-pots, as was desired. Then taking the Great Bodhi Tree and worshipping it in various ways, he said: “In whatever way you like go from city to city.”

The Ruler of Men, surrounded by his army, dismissing them went immediately with his elephants, horses and chariots, and by crossing through the jungle called the Viñjhā forest he arrived at Tāmalitti within seven days.

The gods, Nāgas and men quickly assembled on the highway and worshipped the Bodhi Tree in the way they liked, and worshipped it with a great offering day by day with manifold Heavenly Musicians' music and song, and going gradually they also arrived on the seventh day.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ It is unclear why the weavers are designated as *sparrow weavers*, or what the *hyena* families mentioned below were. Geiger suggests these may be totem clan names.

¹⁶¹ This account is different from the Mahāvamsa, where the Bodhi Tree is put on board ship and sails down to Tāmalitti. Here it appears to be taken by the land route, before it sets sail.

from XIX. The Journey of the Bodhi Tree

The Lord of the World placed the Great Bodhi Tree on the bank on the Great Ocean and worshipped it with various offerings for seven days, and the Guardian of the World, the Best of Charioteers, consecrated the Great Bodhi Tree with sovereignty over the whole of the Rose-Apple Isle.

On the first day of the lunar fortnight in the bright half of Maggasira¹⁶² he raised the Great Bodhi Tree with help given by eight of each from the high-born families appointed at the root of the Sāl tree with all kinds of offerings. He descended into the water up to his neck and established it properly on the ship and invited the Great Elder Saṅghamittā with eleven other nuns¹⁶³ onto the ship with various offerings.

Then he uttered this statement to the chief minister Mahārīṭṭha: “This Great Bodhi Tree, Dear, I consecrated three times with sovereignty over the whole of the Rose-Apple Isle. Now, after bringing the Great Bodhi Tree myself and arranging all kinds of ceremonies here in the port town, I descended up to my neck into the water and established it on the ship with the Elder Nun Saṅghamittā.

Seeing that you are sent back from the city to my friend, the King should also worship it with sovereignty in the same way. As I have made all kinds of ceremonies and offerings my friend the Great King Devānampiyatissa should also make all the offerings that have been made by me.”

Having given this advice to his friend, the resplendent Guardian of the World, lamenting tearfully, uttered this statement: “Alas, the Bodhi Tree of the virtuous one, the One of Ten Powers! While it is still emitting a net of twenty coloured rays we have gladly given it up.”

¹⁶² Normally falling in December.

¹⁶³ These are named in Dīpavaṃsa, XVIII, vv. 11-12 as follows: *Uttarā, Vicakkhaṇā, Hemā, Pasādapālā, Aggimittā, Dāsikā, Pheggu, Pabbatā, Mattā, Mallā and Dhammadāsiyā.*

from XIX. The Journey of the Bodhi Tree

Having said this, the Great King, after making reverential salutation with his head, seeing the Great Bodhi Tree going with the Elder Nun, stood depressed on the bank with a shower of tears set rolling.

While watching the ship with the Great Bodhi Tree on board going from the multitude and the King, after crossing the water someway, the waves settled down for a league all round on the great sea.

Five coloured lotuses on all sides blossomed, and in the firmament manifold instruments played. Manifold offerings were made by the gods, and the Nāgas worked magic in order to seize the Great Bodhi Tree.

The Great Elder Saṅghamittā, who had gained the strength of psychic powers took the form of a Supaṇṇa¹⁶⁴ and frightened the Great Snakes.

Trembling and fearful, seeing the spiritual power and the splendour of the Great Elder Nun, they worshipped the Elder's feet with their heads and begged for their lives, saying: "Don't be angry with us, Noble Sister, on this journey today there will be no obstacle for you, you will be safe; we have come in order to ask for the Bodhi Tree."

She gave the Great Bodhi Tree to the Nāgas to worship and they took the Great Bodhi Tree to the Dragons' abode. They worshipped it with various offerings and gave it sovereignty over the Nāga realm for seven days, brought it back and placed it on the ship, and that same day the ship arrived at Jambukola in Laṅkā.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ The traditional enemies of the Nāgas (a mythical snake) were the Supaṇṇas (a mythical bird).

¹⁶⁵ This is the same port from which the envoys had left Laṅkā, see Ch. XVIII, vs. 8 above.

from XIX. The Journey of the Bodhi Tree

King Dhammāsoka, affected with grief¹⁶⁶ over separation from the Great Bodhi Tree, helpless, looked longingly towards that region, and after making great lamentation, he went back to his city.

[Reception in Laṅkā]

38-51 = Mhv. 23-31

King Devānampiyatissa, who delighted in the benefit of the world, had heard from the novice Sumana about the day of the arrival of the Bodhi Tree, and from the first day that began the month of Maggasira he decorated the highway from the north gate as far as Jambukola with silver leaves of cloth strewn like sand that had been sprinkled all round on the highway.

From the day the King went out from the city he waited at the grounds of the reception-hall by the ocean, and there the Lord of the Earth, through the psychic power of the Great Elder Nun, saw the Great Bodhi Tree coming in the middle of the great ocean, decked out in all its splendour, and by the power of Mahinda, he drew as though close to it.

In that place a hall was made to display the wonders which became well-known as the Ocean Reception Hall. After leaving the Ocean Reception Hall and standing outside, while raising the pandal, he saw both of the roads strewn all round with five-coloured flowers, and various flags and clothes, together with priceless flowers, great water pitchers, all full with lilies.

The Guardian of the World, having placed them at intervals on the road, through the power of the Great Elder together with the other Elders, after leaving, in one day had reached Jambukola.

The Lord of the Earth, driven by joy at the coming of the Great Bodhi Tree, plunged into the water up to his neck and raised the beautiful body of the Great Bodhi Tree on his head.

¹⁶⁶ A play on his name: *Asoka* means *griefless*, here he is said to be *sasokavā*, with grief.

from XIX. The Journey of the Bodhi Tree

He emerged from the ocean, placed it aside with all offerings, and placed it under the care of the sixteen families in that lovely pavilion. For three days on the shore of the ocean the Lord of Laṅkā, having adorned it, worshipped it with sovereignty over Laṅkā.

* * *

[The Nuns and the Nunneries]

118-120 & 166-189 ≠ Mhv 68-85

Near the Lord's Great Bodhi Tree, through the wonder of being near the flag of the true Dhamma preached in the lovely words of the land of Laṅkā, Queen Anulā, with five hundred women and together with another five hundred women of the harem received the going-forth in the presence of the Elder Saṅghamittā, and those one thousand nuns, after developing insight, in no long time¹⁶⁷ attained the state of Worthiness.

* * *

The Great Elder Saṅghamittā lived in the Nunnery known as the Lay-Womens' Monastery together with her Community. She made there three dwelling places which were considered the foremost.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ It seems to me, that as Arahāt Saṅghamittā herself had received the Sikkhamāna training for two years, that she would have asked Anulā and the others to keep it too, so *no long time* here should probably include that period.

¹⁶⁸ In Mhv it mentions that she built twelve dwelling places in all.

from XIX. The Journey of the Bodhi Tree

Previously Queen Anulā had heard a Dhamma teaching in the Elder Mahinda's presence, understood the Truths, donned the yellow robes, undertook the ten precepts and made her dwelling in the home of the minister named Dolaka.¹⁶⁹

Afterwards, with the coming of the Elder Nun to the Island of Laṅkā, these three foremost palaces: Small Chapter, Great Chapter and Increasing Splendour were made by the Lord of the World.

For the benefit of his retinue and many others in the palace, when the Great Bodhi Tree was brought in the ship, the Ruler of the World had the mast placed in the house named the Small Chapter, the sail was established in the Great Chapter house, and then the rudder was placed in the Increasing Splendour house.¹⁷⁰

The Lord of the World, who was of such a kind: endowed with virtue and respect for the Three Treasures, paid lifelong respect to the Bodhi Tree and caused all the places in the Isle to be prepared, gaining a famous name, lasting even until today.

The King's state elephant, which wandered wherever it liked, stayed on one side of the city in a cool spot in a mountain grotto, near to a Kadambapuppha bush, where it grazed.

¹⁶⁹ It appears from this that the Lay-Women's Monastery had previously been Doloka's residence. Exactly how we reconcile this with the statement in XVIII v.12 that the King had built the Nunnery I don't know. It may be that the traditions were not properly harmonised at this point.

¹⁷⁰ Dr. Hema Goonatilake, in her paper, *The Unbroken Lineage of the Sri Lankan Bhikkhuni Sangha from 3rd Century B.C.E. to the Present*, makes the interesting point that these nunneries are the first museums we hear of in history.

from XIX. The Journey of the Bodhi Tree

Often people journeyed there, and after seeing the elephant, and saying: “This elephant delights in the Kadamba Grove,” fed it with rice and fattened up the elephant, and that place came to be known by the name of the Measure of Grain.¹⁷¹

One day the elephant didn't take even a morsel, and the King asked the Elder who brought faith to the Island the reason. “Near the Kadambapuppha bush site he desires that a Sanctuary be built,” the Great Elder said to the Great King.

The King, who was ever delighting in the welfare of the people, quickly built a Sanctuary there together with a relic, and a Sanctuary room.

The Great Elder Saṅghamittā, who longed for an empty abode, as the dwelling place she lived in was crowded, seeking the benefit of the Dispensation, and the welfare of the nuns, being wise and desiring another Nunnery went to that lovely Shrine House, which was comfortably secluded, and spent the day there, she who had faultless skill in dwellings.

The King, after going to the first Nunnery in order to worship the Elder Nun heard that she had left the place. He departed from the Nunnery, arrived near the Shrine House and worshipped the Great Elder.

After exchanging greetings with the Elder Saṅghamittā, understanding her intention, the Guardian of the World, who was a wise man, skilled in intentions, a hero of great power, had a delightful Nunnery built near the Sanctuary House.

¹⁷¹ Contrary to Geiger, who interprets *ālhaka* as meaning *post* (a meaning not found in the Dictionaries), this story indicates that the reason for the name is that the elephant was given a full measure of food by the visitors to the place.

from XIX. The Journey of the Bodhi Tree

The Nunnery was built near where the elephant took his measure of grain therefore it became well-known as the Elephant's Measure monastery.

The good friend,¹⁷² the Great Elder Saṅghamittā, who was greatly wise, then made her dwelling in that delightful Nunnery.

Thus benefiting the world of Laṅkā, and accomplishing the development of the Dispensation, the Great Bodhi Tree, endowed with various wonders, remained for a long time,¹⁷³ in the Great Cloud Grove, in the delightful Island of Laṅkā.

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Nineteenth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
The Journey of the Great Wisdom Tree*

¹⁷² This is a play on her name, which means *friend of the community*.

¹⁷³ Indeed it still remains there to this day, being the oldest historical tree in the world.

[XX. The Complete Emancipation of the Elders]

1-82 ≠ Mhv 1-58

[The Passing of King Asoka]

1-13 ≠ Mhv 1-6

The resplendent King Dhammāsoka established his reign in the noble Pāṭali town, and in the eighteenth year his friend the Great King Piyatissa sent his messengers to the splendid Rose-Apple Island, saying to them: “By the bidding of the wise and virtuous Mahinda please bring the Great Bodhi Tree and the Elder Nun Saṅghamittā,” and he planted the Great Bodhi Tree in the Great Cloud Grove monastery.

Twelve years after that the King's Chief Queen, the dear Asandhimittā, who was devoted to the Perfectly Awakened One, being oppressed by disease fell into the mouth of Death.

After a further four years, the Lord of the World Dhammāsoka, having taken another Queen, Tissadevī by name, appointed this contrary one to Chief Queen in his loss.

Three years later, being foolishly proud of her beauty, faithless and without devotion to the Teacher's Dispensation, delighting in her beauty, which made her rejoice, and being very vain about her birth and lineage, seeing the Guardian of the World constantly going to worship the Great Bodhi Tree, together with his assembly, she became jealous.

Then the Queen thinking like this: “The King is more devoted to this Great Bodhi Tree, than to me,” came under the influence of anger, and being one who works against her own benefit, she destroyed the Great Bodhi Tree with a poisonous thorn.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ The *maṇḍu* (or elsewhere *maṇḍuka*) thorn is unidentified, but it is mentioned both in the Vinaya commentary (on the Pārājika), and in the Jātaka commentary (Jā 186).

XX. The Complete Emancipation of the Elder

The King made his reign for thirty-seven years in all.¹⁷⁵ On the fourth day after the day the destruction of the Bodhi Tree was instigated, having become sorrowful and depressed, oppressed by sickness, the greatly famous Dhammāsoka came under the sway of impermanence.¹⁷⁶

[The Passing of King Devānampiyatissa]

14-42 ≠ Mhv 7-28

But the King Devānampiyatissa, who delighted in the virtue of the Dhamma, built the Great Monastery, and another one near the Cetiya mountain.¹⁷⁷

After completing the building of the Sanctuary monastery he asked the Elder who brought faith to the Island, who was skilled in answering questions: “Venerable Sir, I will build here many monasteries and after completing all the rest of the Shrines, where will I find the relics to place inside them?”

“Sumana filled the Perfectly Awakened One's bowl and brought it to the Cetiya mountain, King, and placed many relics there. Put those relics on the back of an elephant and bring them here.”

Hearing this statement the King was uplifted and decorated the great elephant, the appointed state elephant, and made them give worship, respect and honour in various ways, and going there with the Elder, he brought the relics back.

After buildings monasteries league by league,¹⁷⁸ in every monastery, and inside every Shrine, he deposited the relics, with lovely celebrations.

¹⁷⁵ This figure – and the ones above that precede it – agree with Mhv, but in that text the King is said to have died four *years* after the Bodhi Tree was poisoned, which would have made 41 years in all.

¹⁷⁶ A figurative way of saying he died.

¹⁷⁷ Now known as Mihintale.

¹⁷⁸ I.e at every place.

XX. The Complete Emancipation of the Elder

After placing the bowl the Perfectly Awakened One had eaten from in the lovely Royal Palace, he worshipped it with various offerings everyday.

The five hundred noble sons, having discarded great wealth and fame, went forth in the presence of the Elder of great spiritual wealth. He built a dwelling place with the five-hundred nobles, and in reference to that it was called the Noble Ascetics monastery.

Five hundred people from the farmer class having renounced great wealth and fame, went forth in the presence of the Elder in Mountain Village, and he built a dwelling place there called Farmers' Mountain monastery.

Whatever caves were lived in by the Great Elder Mahinda on the mountain dwellings, those became known as Mahinda's caves.

First the Great Monastery, second the lovely Cetiya monastery, the Sanctuary monastery was third, preceding the lovely Sanctuary itself, but fourth he had the Great Bodhi Tree planted.

The beautiful stone pillar marking the place of the Great Shrine and inside the relic of the Perfectly Awakened One's neck bone, he established fifth.

The Nobles Ascetics' monastery was sixth, the Tissa tank seventh, eighth was the First Sanctuary, ninth the monastery called Farmers' Mountain.

The Lay-Womens' Monastery, and then the one called the Elephant's Measure: it seems the Community of nuns, after entering the Elephant's Measure, which was made for the comfort of the nuns, lived in this home for the nuns.

After leaving the Elephant's Measure, the pollutant-free Saṅghamittā went with the Community of nuns for the reception of food.

XX. The Complete Emancipation of the Elder

Having made a reception hall called the Great Range, for each of the honoured assemblies separately, the King furnished it with all utensils, and gave clothes, food, drinks and so on for both Communities. In the same way he donated to a thousand monks at the Invitation a donation of the very best requisites annually.

In the port of Jambukola in the Nāgadīpa¹⁷⁹ he built the monasteries known as Tissa's Great monastery,¹⁸⁰ and the Eastern monastery, and in all these monasteries he continually and respectfully had great donations prepared day by day.

Thus these deeds were done by the one who sought the kingdom of Laṅkā's benefit, King Devānampiyatissa, to whom virtue was dear, and throughout his life he accumulated countless meritorious deeds.

After attaining sovereignty in the first year, subsequently he did all meritorious deeds, beginning with donations, virtue and so on.

After attaining sovereignty, accumulating merit day by day, sharing what has been called an immeasurable amount, the Island of Laṅkā became prosperous and was protected by the strength of Righteousness.

Devānampiyatissa, who was devoted to the Three Treasures, ruled over the Isle for forty years and then, being oppressed by disease, he fell into the mouth of Death.

¹⁷⁹ Now known as Jaffna, it is not an island, but a peninsular.

¹⁸⁰ Not the monastery of the same name in the south as Geiger suggests.

XX. The Complete Emancipation of the Elder

[The Passing of Arahat Mahinda]

43-64 ≠ Mhv 29-47

After the King's passing his younger brother, well-known as Uttiya, born of King Muṭasiva, ruled righteously.

Then the Elder Mahinda, the Light of Laṅkā, leader of a great crowd, after lighting up the Island of Laṅkā, and propagating the supreme Dispensation of the Victor consisting of proper study, practice and penetration, who, like the Teacher,¹⁸¹ benefited many in the world in Laṅkā, with a virtuous crowd of wise monks in the Community, in the eighth victorious year of the King Uttiya, within the Rains Retreat, after he had dwelt sixty years near the Cetiya mountain, on the eighth day of the bright half of the month Assayuja,¹⁸² that passionless Elder, who increased the light,¹⁸³ attained Emancipation.

As the passionless Mahinda passed on the eighth day it was agreed upon that his name be given to the eighth day.¹⁸⁴

Hearing that, King Uttiya was affected by the dart of grief, and after going, worshipping and lamenting the Elder a great deal, he had the body of the Elder quickly laid out in a golden casket that had been sprinkled with perfumed oil.

He placed that perfect casket on a golden bier and lifted it, and while making righteous ceremonies with a great flood of people who had come together from here and there, he made various offerings with a great army of people.

¹⁸¹ I.e. the Buddha.

¹⁸² Around October.

¹⁸³ Or perhaps: *who increased the (virtue in the) Island.*

¹⁸⁴ It seems each day of the lunar month had a name specially assigned to it, and they gave Mahinda's name to the eighth day of the month.

XX. The Complete Emancipation of the Elder

Going through the city's decorated path, that had many decorations, they lifted and carried the bier along the Highway, and lead it to the Great Monastery, together with the assembly, and placed the decorated bier there.

The Guardian of the World celebrated in the Mango Question enclosure for seven days with arches, flags and flowers, with pots full of incense, adorned for a distance of three leagues around the monastery.

This was through the power of the King, but the whole Island was decorated through the power of the gods.

The Lord of the World made many offerings for a week, then in the easterly direction, in the Elders' enclosure, he made circumambulation of the fragrant pyre near the Great Sanctuary, and lead the delightful bier to that place and placed it on the pyre, paying his final respects.

After lighting the fire, and sprinkling with perfumed water, the Lord of the Earth right there in the Elder's cremation spot made a Shrine and deposited the relics there, as was fit.

The Ruler of Men had half of his relics deposited in the Cetiya mountain, and depositing the rest of the relics in all the monastic Sanctuaries, he made offerings day by day.

The place where the sage's body had been laid is called, out of respect for him, the Seer's Courtyard. Thenceforth after bringing the body of the Noble Ones from three leagues all round, they were burnt in that place.

XX. The Complete Emancipation of the Elder

[The Passing of Arahat Saṅghamittā]

65-74 ≠ Mhv 48-53

The Great Elder Saṅghamittā, of great power, great intelligence, fulfilled all duties to the Dispensation with virtue and wisdom, and benefited many people in the delightful Island of Laṅkā.

Nine years after the beginning of the reign of King Uttiya, fifty-nine years (after arriving), while residing in the Elephant's Measure house, this light of the world passed away.

Hearing that, King Uttiya, affected by the dart of grief, with a shower of tears set rolling,¹⁸⁵ went out with his assembly and just as for the Elder Mahinda, he made supreme offerings and paid respect to the Elder Nun for a week in that place, and decorated the whole of Laṅkā as for the Elder Mahinda.

After seven days the Elder's body was placed on top of a bier and was led round the delightful city with the assembly, and the Guardian of the World, placing the decorated bier aside, near to the Beautiful hall, in sight of the Great Bodhi Tree, on the eastern side of the Sanctuary monastery, in the place indicated by the Elder Nun, had the cremation carried out.

The Lord of the World Uttiya also had a Sanctuary built in that place. Having taken her relics he deposited them in the Sanctuary, and he worshipped there day by day, with all kinds of offerings.

¹⁸⁵ The third time this phrase has been used about the Elder: first when she told her Father, King Asoka, she was going to Laṅkā, and next when she actually left for the Island, never to return.

XX. The Complete Emancipation of the Elder

[The Passing of Other Elders]

75-82 ≠ Mhv 54-58

Also the five Great Elders: Ittiya,¹⁸⁶ Uttiya, the Great Elder Bhaddasāla and the greatly intelligent Sambala, and Mahinda, these five, being without pollutants, attained Emancipation.

Also beginning with the Great Elder Ariṭṭha, greatly wise and skilful, after skilfully teaching many students in the Discipline, Doctrine and Abstract Doctrine, being expert in discrimination, and innumerable thousands of monks who had destroyed the pollutants; and the twelve Elder Nuns beginning with Saṅghamittā, and many thousands of nuns who had destroyed the pollutants, who were learned, greatly wise in the Discipline of the Victor's tradition, after showing the light, shining forth, and lighting up the earth like a mass of fire, being pollutant-free, attained Emancipation.

King Uttiya made his reign for ten years, being oppressed by disease, he attained the state of impermanence, just so is the whole impermanent world heading for destruction.

That man who, knowing that impermanence is very violent, strong and unstoppable, doesn't grow weary of coming to existence, and being tired of it, doesn't have disgust for wicked things and doesn't delight in meritorious things, because of the strength of his great delusion, is one who, though knowing the truth, forgets it.

*Written for the Faith and Invigoration of Good People
The Twentieth Chapter in the Great Lineage called
The Complete Emancipation of the Elders*

¹⁸⁶ Spelt *Iṭṭhiya* elsewhere. Spelling mistake?